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# THE LITERATURE OF JAPAN

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## PREFACE

JAPANESE literature is so voluminous, especially in the modern age, that, in any adequate treatment of it, the difficulty is to know what to exclude, since all cannot be dealt with, but in the present volume that difficulty is obviated by limitation of space. Only the more important works have found possibility of mention, and of these but few could be accorded room for discussion to any extent.

As English translations of some of the more famous Japanese books already exist, it is to be hoped that a perusal of this volume will induce readers to look into them, as well as into larger works on Japanese literature by English scholars, mentioned in the bibliography, specially anything by Satow, Aston, Chamberlain, Brinkley, Dickins and Waley.

Some knowledge of Japanese history on the reader's part I have had to take for granted, reference being made even to the more important dates and events only where quite un-

avoidable The literature of a country can neither be understood nor appreciated apart from some familiarity with the nation's history Nor is full appreciation of the æsthetic quality of literature possible without a working knowledge of the language, for it is difficult to do justice to Japanese literature by translations, since the Japanese do not always mean what we do by the same word, and even the thought and idiom are often so different from our own that misunderstanding is easy

At all events, only a few of the more characteristic passages of prose, together with some typical poetry, has been attempted for presentation in English Most of the poetry I have ventured to do in the original *tanka* metre, and I apologize if here and there I have fallen into rhyme which is so often instinctive to the English ear

J INGRAM BRYAN

# I

## THE BEGINNINGS

(A D 400-800)

### 1 LANGUAGE

BEFORE the appearance of a national literature there has to be a long evolution of the language in which it is written. The Japanese believe the foundation of their empire to date from 660 B C, though authentic history does not really begin until the fifth century A D. Nor is there any evidence of literature prior to the eighth century. Consequently the process of linguistic evolution covers a period of at least a thousand years.

The origin of the Japanese people and the origin of their language are distinct problems. of the origin of the people we know something, but of the origin of the language, nothing. The Japanese are a fusion of the various races and tribes that invaded the archipelago, in prehistoric time, from insular and continental

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areas, but the speech resulting from this fusion has no relation to any of the languages of Asia, or even of the world. An orphan among human tongues, without lineage or affinity, it can only be supposed to be the language of the dominant ingredient in the fusing racial mixture. But what that language was no one knows, the race itself was known as the Yamato.

Contention among philologists ranges between a Turano-African and a Ural-Altaic theory of origin, though some scholars believe in a Manchu-Korean ancestry, with little more proof of it than mere geographical proximity. That the Japanese language has words derived from continental neighbours is no more proof of the origin of the language than the presence of French words in the English vocabulary is proof of a French origin of our language. My own investigations lead to the conviction that there was an extensive Turanian white immigration from Africa along the south coast of India and China to the Far East, which conquered parts of the East Indies, Malaya, Korea and the islands of Japan, mixing with continental races found already there. Bantu seems to be the only language extant that has any similarity to that of Japan, especially



in vocabulary It is only because of its agglutinative features that philologists have sought to trace an Ural-Altaic origin Though not derived from them, it is but natural that the Japanese language should have enriched its vocabulary from Korean, Chinese, Ainu and Indian sources But in all early intercourse between Japan and Korea interpreters were essential, which indicates mutual ignorance of their languages

On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that the Japanese were without a knowledge of writing until the advent of Chinese letters in the fifth century of the Christian era According to the *Nichibunden* it was believed that the provinces of Hizen and Higo had a local script for keeping records, and that Satsuma also had a system of calligraphy, while the Abiru-no-ji is supposed to have been a system of writing that became national That diverse systems should have obtained in the various provinces settled by different tribes is only natural But if such systems of writing existed, they were gradually superseded by the Chinese ideographs as the nation came into closer intercourse with the continent, especially after the introduction of Buddhism in the early part of the sixth

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century Ideographs were then used for the corresponding Japanese words, and given a Japanese pronunciation

The Japanese is distinctively an agglutinative language, building up its words and grammatical forms by means of suffixes loosely joined to roots and stems, the latter undergoing no change, though the particles which take the place of inflexions in other languages, in being affixed to the roots, are sometimes blended with them sufficiently to satisfy the requirements of euphony Other fundamental structural features of the language are its postpositions in place of prepositions, while qualifying words invariably precede the words they modify, and dependent clauses likewise precede principal clauses, the principal verb always coming last in the sentence The object, moreover, invariably precedes the verb There is no relative pronoun, and personal pronouns are few and sparingly used In accordance the dissimilarity to English is still more striking, for the Japanese nouns have neither number nor gender, and adjectives no degree of comparison save the use of "more" and "most" as auxiliaries; and verbs have no persons, yet they have a negative voice, as well as

forms to indicate causation and potentiality, together with an elaborate system of honorifics to compensate for the absence of personal pronouns

The sound of the Japanese language is distinguished for its musical softness, in which it may be said to surpass any of the European tongues. All words end in vowels, save the few concluding with the consonant *n*. The vocabulary has been enriched in a technical way by the adoption of Chinese and other foreign words, and, as women seldom use these, their speech is purer and more musical than that of men. It is interesting to note that the racial fusion has been so effective that the language scarcely varies throughout the empire, which is a great advantage to literature.

But yet the spoken is in many important respects different from the written language. This is in some measure true of all countries, though more so anciently than in modern times. The written language of Japan is also gradually approaching the spoken word, but not to the same extent as with us. Though the literary and the vernacular tend to conformity, chiefly in the Press and in fiction, as well as in public oratory, the difference is yet

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so well marked that one familiar only with the written language would be wholly unable to understand, or to be understood by, others. The spoken is distinctly an ear language, and is never supposed to be written by people of education, being unpleasant to the eye, while the written is an eye language, not intended for the ear, many being unable to understand it without seeing it. The spoken language is natural, and changes with the civilization, the written language is artificial, owing to being built up with Chinese ideographs which are pictures of ideas or substantives. To enable ignorant folk to grasp more quickly the meaning of difficult ideographs a native syllabary was invented in the ninth century, and placed alongside them to convey the exact pronunciation of the characters as we do in dictionaries.

This syllabary consists of forty-eight sounds ringing the consonantal changes on the five vowels, a, i, u, e, o. The syllabic script is derived from simplified forms of certain ideographs, and, placed in alphabet form, is easily memorized. As the Chinese ideographs are in two forms, uncials used for printing and beautiful writing, and cursives used mostly in ordinary calligraphy, the syllabary is like-

wise of two kinds, uncial and cursive, the one known as the *katagana* and the other the *hiragana*. The more illiterate folk are all familiar with the *kana* script and often indite their correspondence in it. It requires a knowledge of some two thousand ideographs to read ordinary Japanese books and newspapers, but for any degree of scholarship familiarity with at least four thousand would be necessary. The Japanese is, therefore, not an easy language for a foreigner to acquire, it demands at least two years of close application to gain any command of the spoken and written forms, and even then there rises a disposition to sympathize with the Jesuit missionary who affirmed the language to have been invented by the devil to prevent the preaching of the Gospel to the Japanese. That several foreigners have distinguished themselves in Japanese scholarship is proof that it can be done. Could roman letters be substituted for the ideographs there would be a greater inducement for foreigners to study the language and literature of Japan, but to so radical a change there is still a spirited opposition.

Associations have been formed and have been vainly endeavouring to gain official con-

sent for the introduction of roman type in Japanese books. The objection to the change is not unlike our own to the use of phonetic spelling. Moreover, the Japanese language has so many homonyms that only as the eye sees the ideographs is the meaning easily understood, though we have the same difficulty and readily surmount it by spelling such words differently, while, in speaking, the meaning is inferred from the context. The only inference is that the fundamental prejudice against such a change in Japan is psychological. In her conservative adherence to the use of ideographs, notwithstanding the radical transformation of her material civilization in the last half-century, Japan betrays her subconscious relation to the Oriental mind.

The Oriental mind clings to its ideographs, while the Aryan advances to the use of an alphabet, the one appeals to the eye, the other to the ear. This change from sight to sound is fundamental, it signifies in some degree the psychological difference between the Orient and the Occident. Those Phœnician merchants who found the Egyptian hieroglyphics too complicated and awkward for the keeping of their accounts, and invented

from them an alphabet, lifted Europe a long step along the pathway of progress, for they made European literature possible. The reduction of all the sounds of the human voice to expression in twenty-six letters did much to create the difference between Europe and Asia.

The Japanese term for *word* (*kotoba*) which means "the leaf of an idea," doubtless expresses the original conception of the ideograph, language had to have as many leaves as there were ideas, and consequently had to picture them instead of sound them, whereas we only sound them and leave the picture to the mind, literature being no more than the spoken sound impressed on paper. All words at the beginning had a sensuous significance, they represented what appealed to the eye, and in their original freshness were images. There was no term which was not primarily the sign of an object belonging to the common stock of shapes and colours, sounds and scents, and all the illusive phenomena of our senses. Even the names of gods had such meaning and significance. The Japanese word for deity is the same as for any high personage. But the effort of the Japanese mind to remember the picture of

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the idea, as well as the idea itself, has imposed on it a double burden that has proved an incubus to education and to literature. It takes the first ten years of a child's school life to master the ideographs sufficiently to use the textbooks, this tends to turn the mind into a memorizing, unreasoning automaton, without initiative or foresight. The use of ideographs also tends to isolate Japan and her literature from the more progressive portions of the world, and it has, too, an injurious effect on literature, subjecting it to artificial restrictions that prevent a natural evolution with race and civilization. The capacity for language and literature implies that man is more than a gregarious animal, he is a social unit as well. He cannot talk to himself, nor can he write for himself. Language is the fruit of social life. The development of language and culture go together; the higher the culture the more readily does it create a more copious means of spoken and written speech. Indeed the language, no less than the literature, of a nation may be justly taken as the measure of its civilization and culture.

As Japan came into closer relations with Korea and China, in the early centuries of our



era, she naturally began to adopt new ways of doing this, including a new medium of written speech. China had her provinces with their officials who kept records of their doings, and Japan introduced a similar system. Then the old minstrels, the *kataribe*, or scribes, gave way before those who could write Chinese. The newly introduced professional scribes had also to write the eulogies recited at the obsequies of rulers and other high personages, as well as to indite dispatches sent to the Court of Korea, or of China. The native assistants under these Korean or Chinese scribes soon acquired the art of writing for themselves. Thus the ideographs took the field which they have never abandoned. What was official gradually tended to become national, and after the advent of Buddhism in A D 522, Chinese learning and literature became general. From the beginning, calligraphy and painting were sister arts, all writing is still done with a brush. The word used to express the act of writing is the same as that for painting, just as it was in ancient Greece. Consequently the native ideographs, and even the syllabary script, have an æsthetic value that is altogether lost in roman type, or if done with a pen, and

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presents a vulgar appearance that is a shock to the Japanese mind

### 2 LITERATURE

The literary influence of China must have been felt in Japan long before there was any mention of it in Japanese history, for there was constant communication between the two countries from the second century A D Chinese records of the later Han dynasty (A D 25-220) say that the Japanese of thirty-two provinces communicated with the Chinese authorities by means of couriers, and the Wei annals (220-265) state that in 238 the emperor of China sent a written reply to a communication from "the Queen of Japan," doubtless meaning the empress Jingo, and that the Japanese dispatched an answer. Such intercourse implies some knowledge of either or both languages. It means at least an interpreter, for we read of documents arriving in Korea from Japan which no one could read for lack of such intermediary. And we have to remember that Japanese scholars were disposed to reticence in regard to their country's dependence on China, if we are to reach safe inferences.

Though some Japanese scholars claim that

there is reason to believe that the more ancient records of the nation were committed to writing as early as the fourth century A D , we yet do not find any authentic traces of literature until the establishment of the imperial capital at Nara at the beginning of the eighth century It may be that the first literary composition was in Chinese, as that was regarded the classical medium for the expression of serious thought, just as Bede regarded Latin in contemporary Britain Consequently literature in Japan and Japanese literature are two quite different things during the first thousand years of the Christian era Not for many years after her acquisition of Chinese letters did Japan make any serious attempt to create a vernacular literature, and even then it was so stereotyped in form, by the use of Chinese ideographs, that it failed to develop naturally with the spoken language Priests and State officials enjoyed a monopoly of learning , and, as many of the first Buddhist missionaries were from China, it was natural that all the more important compositions should continue to be written in Chinese

The earliest existing literary product of Japan is that marvellous treasury of ancient

tradition and myth known as the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Things) compiled by imperial command in A D 712. Like the Book of Genesis, it is made up of traditions and legends handed down by word of mouth by *kataribe*, who may have had some sort of script for making notes, it gives an account of creation, the origin of the imperial family, the early history of the Japanese people, and the general state of the country down to the era just before its compilation. Nine years after the appearance of the *Kojiki* there was compiled another volume called the *Nihongi* (Chronicles of Japan), bringing the national annals down to the seventh century. Its language, however, is mainly Chinese, so that its value as literature is only on account of the wealth of native verse it contains. Both of these volumes were probably based on records kept by the scribes of the various provinces, who had to "note down the statements and communicate the writings of the four quarters." From them we learn that the first teacher of writing in Japan was a Korean named Wani, who came over in A D 404, probably a tutor for one of the imperial princes, and no doubt under supervision of such scholars the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*

were compiled Of these the *Kojiki* is the more valuable document for our purpose, since it reveals the nature of Japan's earliest literary impulses, showing that the nation, like other people, passed through a period of song and poetry before attaining unto an age of prose

Judging from the *Kojiki*, the Japanese mind at that period was neither philosophical, didactic, political nor even satirical, but dreamy, polytheistic and prosaic, and the prose is too illformed and dependent on Chinese models to imply any literary merit Indeed the *Kojiki* is of more importance as an illustration of the manners, myths and superstitions of the archaic period than as a source of either literature or even history The language is a mixture of ideographs some of which are used in the Chinese and some in the Japanese sense without pretension to literary art But the compilation contains several poems of primitive form and content, which well exemplify the beginnings of poetry This verse is primarily an expression of emotion, too mildly personal to sound any profound lyrical note

The *Kojiki* is the first piece of literature in any Turanian language, and records the

myths and traditions of Japan down to the year A D 628 It opens with a description of creation

"Of old the heavens and the earth were one, consisting of chaos The purer part arose aloft to form heaven, and heavier and more solid part descended and became the earth The upper and purer elements easily and rapidly coalesced into the heavens, but the coalescence of the baser elements was slow and difficult The heavenly process was completed long before the earthly process But between the upper and the lower formations there shot up suddenly a new thing that became deity"

And the account goes on to relate the evolution of four other gods, appearing as the result of spontaneous generation There were eventually seven generations of deities, the first two of whom were higher than the rest, the latter emanating towards earthly condition, the last pair being Izanagi and Izanami, the god and goddess of whom Japan was born The creation of Japan came about at the order of the superior deities who commanded the divine pair to create and give birth to the floating land They stood on the *Ama-no-uhashi*, the floating bridge of heaven, thrust down the jewel spear given them by the gods, dipped it in the ocean, and the brine which

dripped from the end thereof became the eight islands of Yamato, the first one being Awaji. Having thus brought into existence the sacred islands, the god and goddess became united in marriage and gave rise to the Japanese race, who are still the children of the gods. The secret of procreation the innocent deities learned from contemplating the water wagtails. These divine ancestors of the Japanese probably represent the heroes who first invaded and conquered the country, the leader striking his boat-pole on the shore and calling the newly discovered land his own.

The first children born of the original divine pair were known as the Sun Goddess and the Moon God, both so very beautiful that they were taken up to heaven to rule the firmament, the Sun Goddess to rule by day and the Moon God to rule by night, and from these sprang all the gods that rule the earth. In giving birth to the god of fire the goddess died and the god was very angry, and pursued her into the unseen world. To follow the details of this mythology would be futile from a literary point of view, but the conceptions it involves no doubt influenced literature. The exaggerations of depiction,

inspired by the vastness of creation, had not a little to do with the development of imagination, without which literature is impossible. When a god weeps, green mountains wither, rivers and seas dry up. The goddess Izanami became one of the principal deities of Hades, and the god Izanagi, after finishing his work on earth, ascended and dwelt in his palace of the sun. The sun goddess, Amaterasu, continues to figure in Japanese literature and religion ever since. The sun goddess quarrelled with her brother Susa-no-O, and so we have a family feud like that of Cain and Abel. In anger she withdrew from action, leaving the world in darkness, and could not be induced to resume her lighting of the world until a divine dance was performed with music and offerings before her abode. There are accounts of incredible monsters, and of animals transformed into other forms of life and impossible exploits innumerable. Through this divine period the heavens and the earth were not far apart, the mists and heat of creation had not yet dissipated. But as the distance began to grow, the Sun Goddess made her divine grandchild, Jimmu Tenno, the first ruler of Japan.

Next to the *Kojiki*, the oldest Japanese



prose composition is to be found in the *Norito*, or Shinto rituals, which, though in rather primitive language, devoted to enumeration of gods and their benefactions, yet often contains more poetic conceptions than the actual poetry of the period. This may be natural in language addressed to deity, at any period. But it is of interest to note that the *Norito* do not undertake to direct the duties and operations of deity after the manner of contemporary prayer-manuals in Europe.

How far the *Kojiki*, the *Nihongi* and the *Norito* can be called literature is a question. They are, however, in some measure a reflection of contemporary civilization and a criticism of life. A nation does not begin to approach any high degree of civilization until it can produce literature, however feeble. And this Japan achieved for the first time in the Nara period, between A D 700 and 800. The work, especially the poetry, of this period has left a permanent mark on Japanese literature. Society by this time had fully emerged from barbarism, and progress was evident in every direction. Hitherto each new reign had involved a change of capital, but now the seat of government became

permanent for almost a century. Consciousness of permanency lent impetus to progress in art, especially in literature. Schools for the study of history, law, medicine and Chinese classics and æsthetics were established. Examples of the result of this new culture have come down to us revealing the remarkable degree of achievement attained. The improvements in architecture under Buddhist auspices, the study of Buddhist scriptures in Chinese, the elaborate artistry of temple worship, the lovely gardens of temple groves, all reacted favourably on literature as on æsthetics in general. The share that Chinese scholars had in this culture was immense. In glyptic, structural and decorative art they were supreme, and so far did Japan come under their tutelage that it was centuries before the nation, after prolonged effort, began to acquire that degree of self-consciousness and mental independence essential to greater mastery over its own capacity to adapt rather than merely imitate Chinese originals, and so permit adaptation finally to emerge into real creation. If any be tempted to suppose that in a century or so Japan had become completely independent of Chinese influence it is well to remember that at this

time, out of 1,177 noble families registered in Japan, no less than 381 were of Chinese or Korean descent, showing the nature and extent of this immigration. It was due to this influence, in a Buddhist form, that Japan was induced to compile the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*, which appeared during the early years of the Nara period.

These examples of early Japanese prose are naturally more informative as to the conditions of contemporary society than is the poetry of the period, especially a poetry so devoid of epic and dramatic qualities and possibilities. The civilization thus revealed is just what might be expected from a study of the politics, government and social life of that time. It is from this literature that we can estimate the extent to which the literary influence of China had penetrated the Japanese mind and led it to reason for itself and to assume a philosophic attitude towards existence. We have seen that progress in this direction remained only too indeterminate and vague. Nor was this scarcely less so in poetry than in prose. The poetry is better, both in form and content, than the prose. The Nara poetry advanced beyond the artless effusions of the *Kojiki*, though it continued to

be more distinguished for polish than for power. It remained chiefly concerned with the more obvious aspects of nature and life, though primarily an expression of emotion, but yet too mildly personal to sound any profound lyrical note. Its unwholesome obsession with the elegaic aspects of existence must be attributed to the pessimism of Buddhist influence which diverted the Japanese mind from the more active and æsthetic aspects of Nature as it is in Japan. It is true that Nature in Japan has her sinister aspects, in earthquake, volcanic eruption and flood, which religion only utilized to create terror rather than beauty, until Nature became a symbol of divine anger. Yet there were poets able to overcome this obsession and reassert the native disposition to rejoice in the beauty of Nature, so that they could sing not only of the varying aspects of Nature, in desire, pain and decay, but even more in the music of existence as seen in its flowers and joyous life, as well as in the humming of insects and the song of birds. It was in contemplation of beauty that the Japanese poet was at his best: the music of water, the snowy glow on Fuji's brow and exquisite tints of sky, sea and land. It is a poetry that lacks greatness.

only through absence of imaginative power and range, there is no impersonation of abstract virtues or qualities, none of the muses and graces of European literature, for Faith, Hope and Charity were not yet born

Yet, apart from the classics of Greece and Rome, what had Europe in the way of literature during the eighth and ninth centuries of the era under review? The first English lyric did not appear before the fourteenth century. But Japan was a land of lyricism from the dawn of literature. The greatest literary monument of the Nara period was the anthology known as the *Manyōshū* (Collection of Myriad Leaves), wherein were garnered the choicest utterances then existing in verse. It still remains the most valuable memorial of the intellectual and literary awakening that followed Japan's more formal intercourse with China. Poets and scholars then began to flock around the imperial Court, and a real national poetry made its appearance. Under the impetus of Buddhist culture the nation began to think about its past, and was impelled to make a record of things done. The result was the two volumes enshrining the sacred traditions of the nation,

writing attained than poetry began to accumulate and adorn the pages of the new compilations of history and tradition, which accounts for the large proportion of verse in the earliest documents

The *Manyoshu* anthology reveals how early Japanese verse attained the measure and form which ever since it has preserved. Its form was as brief as it was unique. The stanza consists of five lines, two of five and three of seven syllables, or thirty-one syllables in all, arranged as follows 5, 7, 5, 7, 7. This stanza is known in the technique of poetry as the *tanka*, or *waka*, sometimes called *waka-uta*, or waka poetry, of which this may be taken as an example

Kokoro daru	If the heart be pure,
makoto no michi ni	And the way be true,
kanai naba	Even without prayer,
inorazu totemo	The gods will guard
kami ya mamoran	

In this poetry there is neither rhyme, alliteration nor accent. The measure of the classical stanza is known as the *shichigoto*, or seven-and-five movement, which all Japanese believe to echo the divine pulse-beat of the race. Each line must end in a vowel or *n*, and with

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only five vowels there is no room for rhyme. The *tanka* verse is divided like a sonnet into two parts the *kami-no-ku*, or upper hemistich, and the *shimo-no ku*, or lower hemistich, and, in recitation, a slight pause must be observed between the parts

Obviously it is a poetry tiny, precise, highly polished, individual and unique. Inherently lyrical, it has nothing of epic or dramatic grandeur or force. There are longer poems known as *naga-uta*, consisting of lines alternating in five and seven syllables, but they are few, alien and unpopular. Undoubtedly they represent an attempt to imitate Chinese poetry, as similar examples in modern times indicate attempts at emulating Occidental verse. This may be inferred from the contents of the *Manyoshu* anthology which was compiled, though by no means wholly written, during the period when Chinese influence was strongly felt in Japan. The *Manyoshu* contains 4,515 examples of national poetry, of which as many as 268 are *naga-uta*, but subsequent anthologies show that the Japanese muse soon reverted to the original *tanka* stanza of the divine period. And this form has remained the standard for classical verse ever since.

In spite of its meagre limits the *tanka* verse, in the hand of a master, has a sweetness and harmony that partakes of cadence. In reading it the music may seem irregular or unsustained, but that is only to the Occidental ear, for the music is there, as real, if as faint, as the tinkle of the *suzumushi*, or bell insect, loved of the Japanese poets, and sometimes even to the extent of a distinct trochaic movement. It remains true, however, that Japanese poetry is never concerned with such prosody as dominates Western verse, though all poetry, even Japanese, has a natural rhythmic instinct. The wonder is that the poet can concentrate so much into such rigid limitations. The poet is like a diamond-cutter who cannot enlarge his jewel, and must depend on commanding sufficient genius to vary its facets to reflect ever more marvellously the divine light. The poem, when complete, represents the most singular example of reticence and economy in all literature. It stands for the utmost expression of language consistent with the highest development of thought by suggestion. The meaning is never stated but simply implied.

In no other country is poetry so accurate an expression of the national or racial mind



The skeleton form is clothed in the images, similes and metaphors in which the race thinks and speaks. The Japanese mind is artistic rather than logical, and is constantly projecting itself in pictures. It is more fond of the impressionistic than the scientific, the concrete than the abstract. In poetry the natural images of daily experience become more picturesque, like the national dress. Poetry also partakes of the natural grace of dancing, or rhythmic movement, for dancing is older than song or even speech. All Japanese dances are interpretations of poetry, which is one of the paradoxes of a poetry that is essentially undramatic. The Japanese are a race tense with pent-up emotion, though, to the foreign eye, they may appear stolid and even buddhaesque, but this shows that it is only by centuries of disciplined repression that Japanese poetry has been kept within the narrow limits prescribed by tradition. Centuries of stern feudal rule have made the whole nation amenable to convention, in poetry no less than in art generally. If freedom for full self-expression be essential to proper racial development, the Japanese have not yet come to full fruition either in social evolution or in literature, though in

certain forms of art they have indubitably attained a high degree of expression. The unbroken fidelity of the Japanese poet to repression and economy has its virtues none the less. It enables him to indulge in illusions, and, unlike the Occidental poet, he is never in a hurry, he refuses to race along spinning out verse after verse in prolix expatiation, he aims only to find a point of truth or beauty, fix upon it, ponder over it, concentrating on what seems vital. Consequently the Japanese poet aims to create an atmosphere and incite introspection. The poetic mind is one that enjoys being rather than doing, toward Nature it is acquiescent rather than aggressive, content to follow rather than command Nature. To the poet, atmosphere is far more important than story or action, he is more concerned with suggestion than depiction.

For this reason the national poetry is always charged with the subtle quality of Japanese painting, suggestive and impressionistic. It enshrines an idea rather than defines it, it stands for a spiritual experience rather than for some definite thought or action. Every true poem is a penetration of reality, through such a tiny window gleam rays of the Eternal

The poem is just enough to excite the mind and leave it to its own resources, it sets the imagination wondering, and then wandering in the fields of infinity. The Japanese poet is thus inspired by the faith that he will be read for all time, he writes for the generations that come after, for Japan is the only country where the poetry composed a thousand years ago is as much appreciated as if created to-day.

Owing to its principle of extreme concentration on some point of reality, Japanese poetry is often driven to expedients of technique unknown to any other poetic composition, such as word-play, sound-play, pillow-words and even pivot-words, which, like coins of the realm, have well-understood currency value to the national mind, but become mere enigmatic problems to the foreigner. Thus by a simple turn of phrase the poet can unexpectedly suggest a world of meaning. Yet to our minds these singular devices appear more ingenious than artistic or even effective. It is not possible by translation to suggest more than a fraction of the meaning and significance which time and tradition have attached to these peculiarities of Japanese verse. The *makura-kotoba*, or pillow-word, is

a redundant expletive employed for the sake of convention or euphony. In the national literature certain epithets came to be naturally and appropriately applied to places, objects and actions, and these crept into poetry as stock phrases of æsthetic implication, especially when used to introduce a subject. We have nothing quite like it except, perhaps, the custom of using phrases from classical poetry or history to enrich a line of poetry, such as "the swift-footed Achilles," or when an Old English poet refers to the sea as "the whale-path" and ships as "tight ocean-wood" and the flute as "glee-wood."

A further rhetorical device in poetic technique is the pivot-word used to end one thought and begin another, forming a sort of pun in which a syllable has two meanings, as in the English couplet

When the carriage stopped we prepared to alight  
Our pipes when the horses took fright

This double-faced meaning adds the humour of gentle surprise to an otherwise prosaic line. The abundance of homophones in the Japanese language is so great that the temptation to resort to this device is strong. A double or

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even triple meaning may be conveyed by a simple sound indefinitely extending the range of suggestiveness, which, as has been explained, is a cardinal principle of Japanese poetry. It would be unprofitable to dwell further on this aspect of Japanese poetry, especially as it cannot be illustrated by translation.

What has to be remembered is that it was in the Nara period that the national poetry acquired the impetus and tone that it has never lost. Not only did it attain to a high degree of art, but it became a favourite amusement of the higher classes, as it is still. We shall see later that at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo the Emperor still holds the annual Poetry Symposium that his ancestors inaugurated at Nara long ago. The attitude of this Nara poetry to Nature and life has been already indicated. Its tendency to brood over the sinister aspects of creation we have ascribed to the influence of Buddhism. And here one has to admit that the impersonal attitude of Buddhism to Nature and religion was inimical to creative literature. To that type of mind and system of thought, things are not done—they just happen, and cannot be helped. Fate becomes more dominant

than will. The incidence of fatalism completely changed the Japanese mind. In the beginning the Yamato race believed in gods that were active rather than acquiescent. Nothing is more clear in the history of thought than that the quality of a nation's literature depends on its conception of deity. Though contemporary Europe had nothing comparable to the poetic excellence of the *Manyōshū*, yet there is a very significant difference between the subsequent progress of literature in Europe and Japan. How far the contrast is due to diverse views of philosophy and religion would be an interesting field of exploration.

Among the earliest poems in Japanese literature are those descending from the gods, whence it arises that the Imperial Family, the direct descendants of the gods, have left posterity some of the oldest examples of verse in the national anthology, and which is one reason why the Emperor maintains a special interest in the art of poetry. Poems written by Japanese sovereigns have naturally been concerned, for the most part, with matters of national interest. From the point of view of civilization, it is remarkable how early these imperial poems are found to be occupied with such subjects as the hard lot of the peasantry,

which that for centuries was condemned to freedom under rather cruel masters. The main source of wealth in the sixth century was from agriculture, and the lands of the clan chiefs were worked mainly by slave labour. As far back as the year 592, we have the Emperor Monmu revealing in poetry a benevolent attitude towards the poor and unfortunate, that must have been rather unique. It is a tenet of the Shinto religion that the Emperor is the father of his people; and it is significant how early the rulers tried to evince this concern of the throne and assume a paternal attitude towards the common folk.

In the following poem, the Emperor, comfortably seated in his palace chamber on a cold wet night, thinks, as he listens to the rain pattering on the roof, how thousands of toilers from the fields find little protection from the elements in their rude temporary shelters, through the mat roofs of which the rain drips and wets the sleeper. This reference to the wetting of the sleeve is a conventional idea in Japanese poetry symbolizing grief, and, in this poem, indicates imperial solicitude for the suffering and the sorrowful.

Aki no ta no	From the rush-mat roof,
kariho no io no	a temporary shelter
tomu wo arami—	in the autumn fields,
waga koromode wa	the rain comes dripping
tsuyu ni nure-tsutsu	through,
	till the sleeves are wet
	as dew

The Empress Jito, a daughter of the above ruler, writing in the year 690, appears no less gifted in poetry. She has left to literature a poem reflecting a picture of domestic sentiment remarkable for so early a time. Probably none but a Japanese poet, however, would have so effectively suggested the beauty of wash-day, the white clothes drying in the sun, clean as snow upon the hillside

Haru sugite	Spring, sweet spring, is past
natsu kinherashi	Summer fair seems com-
shirotae no—	ing,
koromo hosu techoo	In cloud-like whiteness
ama-no-kagu yama	The new-washed clothes
	are lying
	On Kagu's hillside dry-
	ing

In the *Manyoshu* anthology are found some of the best examples of early long poetry, as may be seen from the following by the Emperor Jomei (629-641),



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Yamato ni wa	In Yamato land
mura yama uredô	among great hills un-
toriyorou	numbered
ama-no-kagu yama	soars Amakagu
nobori tachi	aloft in matchless splen-
kuni-mi wo sureba	dour
kuni hara wa	That peak ascending,
keburî tachi-tatsu	surveys one all the coun-
umibara wa	try ,
kamome tachi-tatsu	looks over wide plains,
umashi kuni zo	smoke everywhere up-
akitsushima	curling
yamato no kuni wa !	from a thousand homes ,
	looks out upon the wide
	sea,
	white gulls floating high
	O land to live and die
	for,
	of rich ripe rice ears,
	Yamato, blest forever !

At Otsu Palace the Emperor invited all the poets to submit verses comparing or contrasting vernal and autumnal beauty in the hills , and the following is the poem selected by the judges as entitled to the highest award. The poetess, Princess Nukata (A D 660), gives the palm to autumn because then it is easier to choose a colour with which to decorate her beautiful hair

Fuyukumori	From winter cloudy
haru sarikureba	bright spring now cometh
nakazarishi	stealing,
tori mo hi nakinu	and birds late songless
sakazarishi	do fill the woods with
hana mo sakeredo	music,
yama mo shimi	the hills erst flowerless
irete mo kikazu	the spring with blossoms
kusa fukami	decketh
torite mo mizu	One cannot traverse
akiyama no	bowers dense with leaves
kono ha wo mite wa	and grasses,
momitsu wo ba	nor see birds singing,
okite zo nageku	so thick the spring-green
sokoshi tanushi	branches,
akiyama are wa!	blossoms too lie hidden
	But in the time of autumn
	with ease I traverse
	the thicket on the hillside
	to pluck red maples,
	sprays not with autumn
	ruddy
	I do not gather
	For me, the autumn hills!

Herewith are added some examples of early *tanka*, or classical poetry

Tago no ura	Down fair Tago's shore
Ni uchi-idete mireba	Oft I take my way to see
Shirotae no	The Matchless radiance
Fuji no takame ni	Of Mount Fuji's lofty height
Yuki wa furitsutsu!	Gleaming in the snow-
	fall white!

—AKAHITO (720)

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Oku yama ni	Far among the hills,
Momiji fumi-wake	Treading through the
Naku shika no	crimson leaves,
Koe kiku toki-zo	Cries the mateless stag
Aki wa kanashiki '	When I hear that lonely
	cry,
	Ah, how sad the autumn
	is !
	—SARUMARU (800)

Shira-tsuyu ni	O'er the dewdrops white,
Kaze no fukishuku	Like unstrung diamonds
Aki no no wa	gleaming
Tsuranuki-tomonu	In the autumn field,
Tama zo chirikeru !	The wild wind rushes
	heedless,
	Crushing myriad jewels !
	—BUNYA (890)

Tachi wakare	Though we be parted,
Inaba no yama no	When, on Inaba moun-
Mine ni ofuru	tain,
Matsu toshi kikaba	I hear that music
Ima kaeri-kon !	In the pine-tops playing,
	I'll back to you be
	straying !
	—YUKIHIRA (893)

## EARLY PROSE

" O all ye Princes Imperial, Ministers of State and high functionaries, now assembled, listen and take heed to the great purification at this interlune of the sixth month, purging and washing away all

the sins of imperial officials, attendants, those that wear the scarf and shoulderstrap, as well as those that bear the bow or gird on the sword. In the beginning our imperial ancestors, dwelling on the plain of high heaven, assembled eight thousand myriad gods to hold divine counsel, and they gave command that our august grandchild should hold unruffled sway over this fair land of rice ears and fertile reed plains. But in the land were savage gods whom they divinely disciplined or expelled. Here in the midland of Yamato peaceful rule was established and a fair palace raised with pillars lifted heavenward. Of the

various offences committed by our celestial race some are against heaven and some against earth. It is against heaven to break dykes between rice-fields, to obstruct water courses, remove water-pipes and to slay alive. Against earth are the wounding of living bodies, the mutilation of the dead, incest, leprosy, pestilence and creeping things. the killing of cattle and the practice of witchcraft. Whenever such offences are committed let the highpriest recite this great liturgy. Then the gods of heaven, thrusting open its adamantine doors and cleaving asunder its high-piled clouds, will approach and hear. So shall no offence remain unpurged from the Court of the august child of the gods to the remotest ends of the realm."

#### *The Oharai Norito*

"[Seeing a chopstick floating down the stream] his highness, Haya-Susa-no-O, supposed there must be people living further up along its banks, and

going to investigate, he came upon an old man and woman in distress, a young girl seated between them. He asked them who they were, and they replied, 'Thy servant is Ashunadzushi, a deity of earth and son of the god of the mountain, and my wife is Kushinada.' And when asked why he wept, the answer was that he had eight girls whom the eight-headed serpent of Koshi had devoured, and he wept because the creature was expected to come again. Haya-Susa requested him to describe the serpent. 'Ah', said the old man, 'it has eyes as red as the winter berry, and it has eight heads on one body, with eight tails too, and the body is so large that it is overgrown with moss, pines and cedars, and extends across eight valleys. The belly is the colour of blood, and inflamed to behold.' So Haya-Susa-no-O said to the old man, 'If this be thy daughter, wilt thou give her to me?' 'With all due respect, may I say that I know not thy honourable name?' 'The elder brother of the Sun Goddess, am I come down from heaven?' Whereupon the two deities, the old man and woman, exclaimed, 'In that case we respectfully offer her to thee as a gift.' So Haya-Susa-no-O took the girl, and immediately she was changed into a many-toothed comb which he stuck in his hair, and then asked the two deities to brew some sake of eightfold strength, and to build a fence with eight gates. At each gate he placed a tub of saké. The hydraheaded monster came, and, bending one of its heads into each tub, proceeded to lap up the liquor. It was soon drunk, and fell asleep. Whereupon the Prince drew his ten-span

sword and slew the serpent, the river running red with blood As he struck his sword through the tail of the creature the blade snapped Therein he found a greater sword which he took out, and reported the find to the Sun Goddess This is the great sword known as the *kusanagi* (herbqueller) ”

The *Kojiki* (A D 712)

## II

### HEIAN LITERATURE

(800-1200)

THE Heian era began with the establishment of the imperial capital at Kyoto at the end of the eighth century, and lasted over four hundred years. The new city was named Heianjo, Citadel of Peace, as a good omen for the future of national government, but after a time the name was changed to Kyoto, or western capital, in contrast to the old capital at Nara. The Heian era was one of the most important in Japanese history, for then the formative influences that went to the making of Japan concentrated on progress under a more effective centralization of government, until art and culture witnessed unprecedented development. The Buddhist devotion to learning, and to æsthetics generally, reacted favourably on literature, though the steady encroachment of Chinese conventionality tended to stereotype form in composition no

less than in art. But art attained a high degree of conception and execution seldom equalled since, yet it was an art that appealed more to the senses than to the mind. Notwithstanding the marvellous creations in fabric, metal and painting, art was more an expression of the sensuously human than of the exquisitely divine.

This weakness was doubtless due to defective views of deity and consequently of ethics, for excessive devotion to luxury and sensual pleasure lent impulse to the excess that is below art, and had a paralysing effect on literature. For a hundred years after the occupation of the new capital literature languished, owing not only to unethical excess but to the concentration of the national mind on things Chinese. So far there was no great native prose, all serious composition was in Chinese, and even poetry was thought to be more dignified in that language. The case of literature was much the same as in our Middle Ages when Latin was thought to be superior to English as a literary medium. When prose did begin, towards the end of the tenth century, it was mainly in the form of *belles-lettres*, and was considered frivolous composition fit only to express the ideas of women.



During the early part of the Heian era the impulse was naturally toward poetry, and toward lyrical rather than epic verse. These were centuries of serene development when the ruling class entered on a period of culture, refinement of manners and elegance of life that led to effeminacy of character and laxity of moral fibre. There were no great deeds, no great action, and consequently the impulse to epic and drama was absent, nor did history find much worth recording. The literary impulse seems to have exhausted itself, in the historic sense, through compilation of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*, and even these were mostly myth. The age of the gods depicted in these two volumes, was difficult for mortals to live up to, for, of the present, who can relate supernatural things? Even the national Muse became petty and restricted, devoted to sensual love and gaiety, or mere admiration of nature. But poetry was at least natural and native, which could not be said of the prose compositions in Chinese.

But both poetry and prose are alike a faithful reflection of contemporary society. The concern of vernacular literature was with the cultured circle of laughter-loving, lotus-eating, reckless, dancing knights and ladies of

the imperial Court, all of whom appear devoted to verse. Indeed poetry appears to have often been made an excuse for delights less æsthetic. Under imperial auspices a Department of Poetry was created at the Palace, which held poetry symposia from time to time and awarded prizes to the successful competitors, as is still done in the imperial capital. Dissatisfied with the *Manyōshū* anthology, the Emperor had a new one compiled under editorship of the most distinguished poet of the day, Tsurayuki. This anthology, which appeared in 922, included all the best verse of the previous century and a half, it was entitled the *Kokinshū*, meaning Poems Ancient and Modern. In it were examples of verse from such famous poets as Yūki-hira, Narihira, Otomo, Oshī Kōji, Henjō, Ono-ne-Komachi the poetess, and from the pen of the editor himself. The eleven hundred poems in these twenty volumes cover all the themes then popular in such composition, but mainly the seasons of the year, individual felicitations and farewells, love, sorrow, and the pain that clings to all desire. Only five are long poems, and even these are short, but the rest are in the native *tanka* metre of thirty-one syllables. Through all the cen-

turies since, the *Kokinshu* has remained the best anthology of Japanese poetry, nor has it lost interest to readers of even the present day. For the Japanese poet does not leave his blossoms to wither with drooping foliage, nor to lie pressed between the leaves of books, he casts them to the winds to be caught by the stream of time, and borne down the centuries to delight after generations. The consequence is that the poets of long ago are read as much as those of the passing year. To write for all time, and be read for all time, may surely be adjudged the goal of true poetry. To the lover of poetry in Japan every *tanka* is a gem of luminous intensity, he exults in poring over the national anthologies as over rosaries of gems lustrous with starry splendour, sparkling with the heart-throbs of eternity.

Tsurayuki's introduction to the *Kokinshu* is a brilliant essay on criticism in poetry, which reveals a quality quite modern, if not indeed superior to some of our conceptions of poetry. "The poetry of Japan, as a seed, springs from the heart of man, creating countless leaves of language. In a world full of things man strives to find words to express the impression left on his heart by

sight and sound ” Some of this essay shows Chinese influence, echoes of the *Shih-Kin*, a book of odes with which the Japanese poets were familiar “ To move the heavens and the earth, to touch the hearts of demons and deities, is this not the real office of poetry ? ” Again “ And so the heart of man came to find expression in words for his joy in the beauty of blossoms, his wonder at the song of birds, and his tender welcome of the mists that bathe the landscape, as well as his mournful sympathy with the evanescent morning dew.” In accounting for the decline of poetry, Tsurayuki says “ In these days men are lost in sensuality, and consequently aim at mere decoration, the result being vain and trivial In circles given up to luxury poetry is as hidden from knowledge as a log of bog-oak In the really cultivated ranks of society poetry is, of course, known, but it is as a flowering reed that produces no fruit ”

One of the most delightful prose compositions of the tenth century is this preface to the *Kokinshu* by Tsurayuki, and another from his pen, but more idyllic, is the *Tosa Nikki*, written in 935 The author had been the Fujiwara governor of Tosa in Shikoku, and the *Tosa Nikki* is a rambling account of

his voyage back to the capital at Kyoto after his term of office ended. As an example of the best prose of the period the work is a gem, and it is sprinkled with poetry as well. The author always refers to himself in the third person. It took him fifty-five days to sail two hundred miles, and at every port of call he received deputations from local officials bringing presents, in accordance with the national custom. Travelling was dangerous in those days, whether by land or sea, owing to bandits and pirates. Inebriety was then obviously a feature of social occasions. The ship's crew frequently hooked fish by the way, mostly seabream. Some of the passengers landed at the ports to take hot baths, then as much a habit as now. Tsurayuki impresses us as a fine example of the gentleman of old Japan. No less a poet than a scholar, he is regarded as the Horace of the Golden Age of Japanese literature. His verses scattered through the *Tosa Nikki* are like gems in a great piece of tapestry. Some of the images from nature are vividly true.

How the wave crests seem to be  
Tipped with snow far out to sea !

To allay the stormy sea, paper prayers are

thrown to the sea god, these having no effect, the poet propitiates him by hurling overboard his most valued possession, a beautiful hand-mirror, and then the sea abates. Arrived home after five years' absence, he finds his garden let run to weeds, like his own heart at the loss of his child

Yet the pine tree spines live on  
Though our little girl is gone

Those who desire to know more of this poet will find some of his verse translated in the volumes of the Asiatic Society of Japan

In its delicacy and refinement the prose of Tsurayuki forms a contrast to other compositions of the time. Contemporary literature portrays a society frankly immoral but yet devoid of grossness, for the degree of æsthetic appreciation and ability revealed was unequalled by any writer in the Europe of that time. Some of the thought is surprisingly modern.

The degree of refinement in language, and of art in composition, evinced by the literature of this era, must be taken as an indication of the intellectual progress of Japan at that time, however restricted in area, for it is obviously the literature of a class. But for

such an acceleration of literary development the nation had long been in preparation. The native language, which for centuries had been in subservience to Chinese idiom and convention, now revealed signs of having won the freedom and naturalness essential to literature. With its rich system of terminations and particles, the Japanese language had become a pliant instrument in native hands, while the vocabulary was varied and copious to a degree that is amazing when drawn almost wholly from native sources. The art of composition had reached so high a measure of attainment that Japanese ideas could be adequately expressed in the vernacular without the usual resort to Chinese circumlocution, yet so prejudiced did scholars continue to be against it as an instrument of serious composition, that the best work in the native tongue was done by women. There was possibly some reason for this, because, notwithstanding the greater perfection of vernacular literature in the Heian era, its matter lacks the high seriousness of supreme achievement. With all its evidence of culture and refinement, it reflects an effeminacy of class, and a hedonism of society, without sufficient moral stamina to endure

As yet there was no really great prose. Only poetry and fiction were natural and artistic. Chinese tradition, like the Latin tradition in medieval England, had become so stereotyped that all the more thoughtful work, such as history, theology, science, philosophy and law, were still composed in that language. Like Lord Bacon who, in his day, supposed that no work worthy of his ability could find adequate expression in his mother-tongue, so the scholars and all the more serious writers of Japan hesitated to use any but the language of China, which, however, unlike Latin, was still a living language. But this explains why the vernacular literature of the early Heian era is confined mostly to poetry, fiction, light essays, and what is known as *monogatari*, a prolix and dreamy sort of composition, consisting of gossip or diaries of a desultory trend. Facetiously called *zuritsu*, or following the pen, this literature did not pretend to do more than help the jaded mind to pass an idle hour. The writers as well as the readers thereof belong to the official class, a very narrow circle; and it reflects little of the thought or condition of the masses of the people.

Naturally most of this lighter kind of litera-



ture was left to the composition of women whose person no less than status was regarded as inferior to men, a reflection of Buddhist and Confucian influence, for, centuries before this, women appear to have occupied a higher status in Japanese society, some of them being warriors and leaders distinguished in history, including empresses. But they could scarcely have been more intellectually distinguished than the women writers of the Heian era. It is extremely doubtful whether the men of that time could have done better work in literature than has come down to us from the pen of Murasaki Shikibu and other women of the period. As already indicated, the men thought it beneath them to attempt anything by way of literature in the vernacular, though they did not consider it beneath them to essay worse adventures. The remarkable thing is that native literature should not have reached full efflorescence until the eleventh century and then under the auspices of woman.

It is safe to assume that the women writers of this time were hardly less intellectually and æsthetically gifted than their lordly superiors. Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shonagon probably commanded an art and culture above most of

their contemporaries of either sex, for religion and politics had not quite so profoundly affected the status of woman as they did later. Woman had still the courage and ability to defy alien notions of her place and power in society and art. Her literary work has about it a freedom and a dignity, as well as an originality, that few men of the day could have surpassed or even equalled. From the *monogatari* we get some insight into contemporary life, a life gentle and domestic in character, and merely social in outlook. Together with functions of the imperial Court we have slight glimpses of home life, and of love affairs, with other romantic incidents. Beautiful dresses and love intrigues are prominent. And as we read what they have written we cannot forget that the language is more refined and the ideas more elevated than in the literature of the Tokugawa period, several centuries later.

Among the earliest of the *monogatari* literature was the *Taketori Monogatari* (Bamboo Cutter's Tale) written about the beginning of the tenth century. It is full of delicate fancy and romantic incident, the whole suggesting a Buddhist note. One day a bamboo-cutter found in the node of a tree a tiny babe,

so tiny that she sat like a butterfly in the hollow of his hand. He took her home to his wife, and she grew to be the most beautiful creature human eyes had ever seen. It turned out that she was Kaguya, the Lady of Light, who had become thus exiled from the moon for allowing her mind to rest overmuch on love. But now by her steadfastness and shrewdness in resisting her numerous lovers on earth, including the Mikado himself, she was purged from all stain of sin, and just at the moment when the imperial kidnappers were approaching to carry her off, the angels appeared and bore her away in triumph back to her palace in the moon. Thus the lovely moon-maiden satisfied Buddhist standards of rectitude, loyalty and filial piety.

The *Ise Monogatari* is more formed but less simple than the *Taketori*, written in a clear, concise style that the Japanese admire as a good example of the nation's older literature. In a series of short and rather unrelated chapters are narrated the incidents of a young nobleman's life at the imperial Court, some of the love episodes being more suggestive of fiction than of fact. Amid revelations of human inconstancy there is some degree of humour, with poems appropriate to the theme.

The hero finally departs on a journey through north Japan, describing some of the more historic places. The *Yamato Monogatari* is obviously a poor imitation of the *Ise*, even to similar short tales and poems.

The *Utsubo Monogatari* is supposed to be from the pen of the author of the *Taketori*, though all the fourteen stories in it may not be from the same hand. As it is mentioned in the *Genji Monogatari* and the *Makura-no-soshi*, which date from the end of the tenth century, it was probably composed half a century earlier. What is left of the original text, after passing through the hands of numerous editors, reveals a plain, direct style of no special significance. The hero, Toshikage, is a scion of the Fujiwara family by an imperial princess. So precocious that at the age of nine he can conduct a correspondence in Chinese, the lad grows up to become a scholar and is made ambassador to China. But he is shipwrecked on the way to his post and saved by praying to the Goddess Kwanon, thereafter finding himself in a land of supernatural beings that menace him. He finally manages to return to Japan where he finds a worthy wife and settles down to the enjoyment of a miraculous daughter born to

him. It is on the whole an impossible story. The *Hamamatsu Monogatari* is concerned with the tale of a nobleman who went to China and had an intrigue with the Empress, a child was born, with which he returned to Japan. This work was written probably about the middle of the tenth century. In the same period appeared the *Ochikubo Monogatari*, the author being a minor official named Minamoto. The name *Ochikubo* means a cave in the earth, in which a lady of noble blood was imprisoned by her step-mother, but was rescued by a young noble brought to her by a maid-servant. Of course they marry and are happy.

The greatest prose work of the Heian era was the *Genji Monogatari*. The author was a lady of the famous Fujiwara family which produced so many mikados, statesmen and poets. Displaying a love of learning from an early age, she became well versed in the Japanese and Chinese classics, and later devoted her lonely widowhood to literature. A long association with the imperial Court gave her that familiarity with its secrets and customs plainly evident in her book. Her composition represents a striking improvement on all previous literature of the kind. The numerous *monogatari* that preceded it

were merely short tales consisting of romantic incidents far removed from real life, and of small literary significance. But the *Genji* is a realistic work dealing with actual men and women in their daily surroundings in the frankest manner she treats their sentiments and passions as well as their sins and sorrows. With a wonderful command of classic grace she makes no attempt to harass the feelings, nor to depend on sensation, to maintain interest, the unnatural, the monstrous and the improbable being excluded. Dramatic situations are few, and the supernatural element was natural to the time.

The *Genji Monogatari* is the first great novel in Japanese literature, and the best vernacular composition up to that time; it has seldom been equalled since. It is to Japanese fiction what Sidney's *Arcadia* and the novels of Fielding are to English fiction. Charged with humour, fancy, phrasing sentiment, keen observation of life and manners, due appreciation of nature, with a supreme command of the Japanese language, the *Genji Monogatari* is a mirror of contemporary society. The most delicate situations are depicted in a flowing idiom that need not raise a blush. The work was written about A.D. 1000 by Murasaki

Shikibu, a lady of the imperial Court, who retired into private life after the death of her husband. Its 4,000 pages, divided into fifty-four chapters describe the author's experiences at Court during a great part of the tenth century. The style of the last ten chapters indicates a different hand, possibly that of her daughter, author of *Sagoromo*, another masterpiece of Japanese literature.

The aim of the *Genji Monogatari* was to portray critically the condition of contemporary society as a subject of supreme political and literary interest. One of the leading characters in the volume says

"Ordinary histories are mere records of events, which are generally treated in rather a partial manner, giving no true insight into the state of society, but society is the very sphere with which a work of the kind I undertake should deal. While a *monogatari* is fiction, it is by no means a pure invention of the author, for it traces real characters, the best to represent the good, and the worst to represent the bad, for admonition."

Nor has fiction since improved on this philosophy.

The scenes presented in the volume are perhaps more diverting than edifying, but that is characteristic of most society literature.

Society appears to have been more stiffened with the starch of Chinese convention than supplied with the stamina of moral uplift. High personages did not hesitate to pass their time in intrigues of love and lust, nor scruple to prove treacherous to their rivals and even friends. It is significant that the hero of the piece is given the name of Genji, the classical designation of the great Minamoto family. This young prince was born of an imperial favourite who died later of a broken heart through the relentless persecution of jealous rivals who could not endure the young mother having won the Emperor's heart by bearing him "a jewel of a son." Afraid that her own son would lose the chance of becoming prince imperial, a bitter rival of Genji's mother showed her no mercy, the imperial harem "one and all combining against her." It was the custom to summon to the imperial harem any lady that took the Emperor's fancy. The hero of the piece, Genji, inherited the instincts and tastes of the circle in which he was brought up. After a gay youth spent in questionable pleasure, Genji marries, but frequents the company of his old favourites still. To him a woman was no more than a toy to be used as he wished and then thrown



away. It seems to have been a custom for men to meet in the evenings to hear each other's love letters, discussing the characters of their mistresses. Some of the prince's exploits in kidnapping women are thrilling. On account of presumptuous conduct in regard to the imperial harem the young prince was finally banished from Court and went into exile. The book is not all given to gossip of this sort, there is some apt criticism of art, and illuminating allusions to other subjects of interest.

Scarcely less significant of the development of Heian literature is the *Makura-no-soshi* (Pillow Sketches), by Sei Shonagon, another lady familiar with the imperial Court of which she gives some brilliant sketches, mainly trivial. In this work the individuality of style is interesting no less than the degree of humanity implied. She is obviously not unlike the woman of to-day, disliking to have the dog bark when her lover calls, or to see her lover look sleepy when she is telling him a story. Nothing is so distressing to her as to look upon a dead baby, or to contemplate a fire that has gone out. She is cheered by the discourse of a priest who speaks clearly, especially if he is handsome, for then it is

easier to feel the truth of what he says. The sermons of the ugly the hearer is apt to turn from and forget. Things not pleasant also include being shut up in a house with old love-letters on a wet day, and rarities are beloved sons-in-laws and uncomplaining servants. One of the things better not done is to eat strawberries in the dark, and another is to write letters with no news in them.

These Pillow Sketches jotted down from time to time have an ancient charm that we can feel still. She touches every aspect of life that came within her experience, but she never loses herself in the people she describes, as does the author of the *Genji*. And she has a poet's love of nature: the dawn whitening the east while purple clouds hang just above, dawn's rosy tinge on the mountain's crest, the moonless night when fire-flies flit across each others' paths like falling stars, the rooks seeking a roost on autumn evenings, the lines of wild geese receding to tiny specks in the distance, the chirruping of insects in the dusk after sunset. She expresses much sympathy for priests who are not allowed a peep at beauty, and still more for them when they are expected to exorcise evil spirits.

The *Sagoromo Monogatari* is an imitation of the *Genji* by the daughter of Murasaki Shikibu, it is a lengthy love-story of the middle tenth century, and the style and matter are inferior to the model. The *Sarashina Nikki*, by Sugawara Takasuye, composed about 1068, is a record of his journey from Shimosa to Kyoto by the Tokaido in 1021, and it contains the account of a second journey to Sarashina in Shinano some years later. The tone is sad, even in the poems inserted here and there. The *Torikachaya Monogatari*, at the end of the eleventh century, relates the difficulties of a nobleman in bringing up a son and daughter, the one wanting to be as a woman, and the other as a man, his acquiescence being a mistake. The *Uji Monogatari*, by Minamoto Takakuni, presents a lively picture of middle and lower class life, and abounds in interesting folklore. There were numerous other *monogatari*, such as the *Idzumi Shikibu*, the *Ima*, the *Tsutsumi*, the *Akiyo* and the *Matsuho*, but they are of no literary interest.

Near the end of the eleventh century appeared the first work of history, though in the form of a *monogatari*, known as *Yeiwa*, the authorship of which remains uncertain,

but it has been ascribed to Akazomé Yemon, the poetess. Its forty books cover some two centuries of history, ending with 1088. The treatment, however, is more imaginative and poetical than historical, preferring romantic episodes to facts. The atmosphere is Buddhist throughout. Another historical work, the *O-Kagami* (Great Mirror) by Tamenari, of the Fujiwara family, covers fourteen reigns up to A.D. 851. But its meagre sixty-four pages of biographical sketches form no important contribution either to history or to literature. It probably represents a Buddhist attempt to give a vernacular history to those who could not read the official histories in Chinese. The use of the term "mirror" for history is interesting, as there are several other works so entitled, as the *Masa-Kagami* and the *Mizu-Kagami*.

Turning from prose to poetry it will be seen that there was little change from the sentiment and none from the form of the Nara age. There was neither the courage nor the inclination to depart from the old masters. In literature the spirit of the past became supreme. If this could be taken to mean a reverence for the truth of antiquity, and the antiquity of truth, it would be well, but of

this there is little evidence. With the moral laxity that attended the adoption of Chinese ways in almost every department of life, the tone of society was effeminate and given to luxury and ease. Poetry was still an amusement of Court circles, and was often too formal and lifeless. Simplicity and brevity remained the most characteristic features of verse. But the brevity was not always the soul of wit or even wisdom, for in Japan the poets were mortal, as elsewhere, more concerned with form, like the poets of the classical period in England, who could

Make poetry a mere mechanic art  
Where every scribbler has his tune by heart

It is clear that Tsurayuki, of all the poets, remained closer to the spirit of poetry than most of his contemporaries. In 922 he wrote "By multiplication of our thoughts and language we express our love of flowers, our envy of birds, our emotion at the haze that ushers in the spring, or our grief at beholding the dew." The characteristic subjects of poetry continued to be the splendour of spring, the glory of flowers, the purple haze suffusing the golden sunlight of summer, nowhere so ethereal as in Nippon, the infinite

variety of bird and insect life, the falling yellow autumn leaves, sadly reminiscent of decay, the living silver of the lonely moon, and the unearthly whiteness of winter snow; above all, the love and passion of men and women, and the shortness of life's span

Familiar as such themes may seem to us, none of them is treated after the usual manner of the Occidental poet. Naturally no emphasis is laid on concrete action or object, though from these the essential atmosphere may be created. But scene and movement are left to imagination. The reader must create his own mountains, picture his own fields or fancy his own sea scenes, for, after all, the only mountains, fields and seas that we know are those we have seen. In this poetry the lover will find no sonnets to the graceful figure or fair features of his mistress, nor even the hint of a kiss to celebrate the birth of love, for in Japan lovers do their own kissing, and would be disgusted to have poets or novelists do so for them, and what real lover is there who cannot much better make such pictures for himself? Nor again will the recluse hear any direct summons to meditation, anticipatory or retrospective, nor even praise of gods or their palaces and deeds. There is no

minute concentration on details, however precious, but only a glimpse of the spirit behind all beauty, a mere flash of reality, and we are left to build our own visions and draw our own conclusions. The poet that has to explain his poetry is no poet, and those who require the poet to be his own interpreter, for them he does not write.

The words of the poet Tsurayuki, written over a thousand years ago, are as true for the Japanese poet to day as they were then.

' To verse the poets were moved when they saw the ground white with snow, showers of fallen cherry blossoms on spring mornings, or heard on autumn evenings the rustle of falling leaves, or year after year gazed upon the mirror's doleful reflections of the ravages of time, shown by grey hairs and wavy wrinkles, or trembled as they watched the ephemeral dewdrop quivering on the beaded grass, or the river's flow flecked with perishing bubbles, symbols of man's fleeting life, or noted the leaves, in all the glory of their prime, perishing to morrow, or what one had admired yesterday regarded with indifference to day "

Nor is this ancient theory as to the proper content of poetry proved altogether ineffective in practice, if poetry is to be regarded as something more than a tale that is told. Divorced from nature, poetry is dead. Poetry

regards nature as a window, not to look at but to look through, the lens through which the mind focuses on the central point from which reality radiates the poet lifts us into a universe that feels and knows But it is the personal light that flashes from the truth, which reveals it and causes the radiation It is not the subject that inspires the poetry, but the poetry that inspires the subject, and makes it live, so that even in life's commonplaces the poet sees eternal significance, for poetry is not of temporal but of timeless things It is in this fundamental respect that Japanese poetry is so often defective It is too impersonal in regard to nature, and so just fails of the divine vision The Japanese poet is right in holding that the essential quality of poetry is always the same Like the sunlight and the air, poetry in essence does not change, because of its eternal quality But the range of its mutation must none the less be as wide as life, if it is to hold up the mirror to nature, for truth has many more sides than even the facets of a diamond The poetry of the past may be a priceless inheritance, but it will not do for the present it is not enough, for each age must reinterpret and reincarnate life anew The poetry of the past cannot save an



age incapable of poetry from natural oblivion. A mere imitation of the past is not creation. As no human being is an exact copy of another, and would be very funny if he were, so is it with poetry. The movement of poetry ranges over the whole immense sweep of existence. Movement is as much an essential condition of poetry as it is of all creation. Like flame, poetry leaps into being, the same and yet never the same. It is a serious defect, therefore, that Japanese poetry at this and all subsequent periods was unable to outgrow the vesture of the past and don new attire, but since the new robe would have to be never less but ever more beautiful than the old, it was better that it should hold to its standards than to have lost them and disappeared. How Japanese poetry was able to ignore development and yet avoid decay, is one of the most remarkable facts in the history of art. For art must insist on development to avoid decay, like life itself. Just as the Japanese girl of to-day must not be less but more charming in face, physique and character than the girl of long ago, so is it with poetry.

But so long as the gems of literature are not wisely to be ignored, Japanese poetry is

entitled to careful study. How to suggest accurately and effectively the significance of sound and scene in purling stream, falling snow, the cuckoo's note, the music of insects and the joy of all creeping things, is an art of power that the Japanese poet has achieved in a manner and degree that can only be regarded as poetry. It is in this love and exploitation of beautiful things and places that the Japanese are an incarnation of the ancient Greeks. In regard of nature, the Japanese do not admire expansive views so much as little glimpses of beauty. They appreciate not so much great mountain heights and ranges, nor endless sea vistas, lakes or plains, so much as they appreciate definite scenes or facts representing much in little—the *multum in parvo* of the ancients, or, better still, *Quam multa ' Quam paucis*! That is, the concise in style and the pregnant in meaning, which is, to the Japanese, the essential characteristic of a fine poem equally with a fine painting. It is the scene rather than the scenery that concerns the poet.

Who that has seen the wild geese homing in the moonlight as winter approaches, their wing-tips overlapping, does not appreciate the poetry of this *tanaka*?

Shira-kumo ni	Through the white clouds
hane uchikawashi	high,
tobu kari no—	with wing-tips overlap-
kazu sae miyuru	ping,
aki no yo no tsuki	wild geese homeward fly
	each afar distinctly seen
	in the fair moon's autumn
	sheen

Or the following stanza on the cuckoo ?

Hototogisu	Where the lone cuckoo
nakitsuru kata wo	has long been crying,
nagamureba—	I gazed, alone too,
tada ari ake no	and yet nothing met my
tsuki zo nokoreru	eye
	but the morning moon
	on high

Here is a poem by Chunagon Kanasuké, who lived about A D 900. The theme is not new, though it is older than the English romance of *Ipomedon*, by Hue de Rotelande, which has the same motive, the idea of a lover who falls in love with a lady he has never seen. It is an odd conception that only a poet could hope to express in truly literary form, or preserve in song. This poet's mind carries the imperishable vision of a charming face which fancy has created, or which indeed he may have seen but never met, and which

has created in him and kept alive the sweet emotion of love. The poem is charged with subtle word-play which no translation can preserve, this is specially centred around the idea of trying to recall where and how this ideal beauty dawned on his mind. It seemed to come upon the poet as a sudden flash, a vision fair as the Izumi River, glowing with full beauty. The name Izumi, broken into syllables, *itsu mi ka*, means When did I see her? And *itsu miki tote ka*, has a similar idea, as if the poet were uncertain whether he came to love her and long for her because of having seen her, or merely from having dreamt or heard of her. But no matter when or how, love is always a mystery.

Mika no hara	In "Do-I-see" field,
wakite nagaruru	Gushing forth and flow-
Izumi gawa—	ing free,
Itsu miki tote ka	is "When-I-saw" spring—
koishi karuran	O, if I have not seen her,
	why do I so long for her?

Immeasurable are the hours that love has waited. And yet it is still the most delightful, if yet the most painful, of all waiting. The bitter-sweets of love unconsummated the poets of all ages have laboured to express; and seldom more poignantly has this been

done than in the following poem written by Sosei Hoshi at the beginning of the tenth century

Ima komu to	Just because she said
nishi bakari ni	"In a moment I will
nagazuki no	come",
arake no tsuki	for her I've waited
wo machi izuru	through a whole long
kana !	month, until
	the moon appears at
	daybreak !

About the same time, Sugawara Michizané, the distinguished Japanese patriot, banished to Kyushu because of his opposition to Fujiwara domination of imperial prerogative, takes leave of home and friends in this *tanka* which has long been used by literary critics in Japan as an example of the ideal stanza

Ide inaba	When I've departed,
nushi naki yado to	and of home taken last
narinu to mo	leave,
nokiba no ume yo	my house deserted,
haru wo wasuruna !	O plum tree by my
	thatched eave,
	forget not spring's bloom
	to give !

A few more examples of *tanka* are given to illustrate the poetry of this period

Yura no to wo  
 wataru funabito  
 kaji wo toe  
 yuku e mo shiranu  
 koi mo michi  
 kana !

Toss'd on Yura's tide,  
 the lone mariner saileth,  
 with rudder lost, alas !  
 Sow hither o'er love's  
 ocean  
 lies my goal, I've no  
 notion !

—SONE YOSHITADA (950)

Hisakata no  
 hikari nodokeki  
 haru no hi ni  
 shizu-kokoro naku  
 hana no chiruran !

O sunlight endless,  
 so full of joy and laughter  
 all the days of spring,  
 why, with such impa-  
 tience,  
 let the cherry blossoms  
 fall ?

KI TOMONORI (940)

Aimite no  
 nochī no kokoro ni  
 kurebureba  
 mukashi wa mono wo  
 omawazari kerī !

Having met my love,  
 afterwards love's passion  
 grew  
 beyond all measure,  
 till the love I felt before  
 now with that compares  
 no more !

ATSUTADA (943)

Hito wa iza  
 kokoro wa shirazu  
 furusato wa  
 hana zo mukashi no  
 ka ni moi-kerī !

Ah no, as for man,  
 what his heart is, who  
 can tell ?  
 In this old village  
 the blooming plum tree,  
 I presume,  
 still emits the same per-  
 fume !

TSURAYUKI (946)

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Chigiriki na	Each hath pledged to each,
katami ni sode wo	while wringing our tear-
shibori tsutsu	drenched sleeves,
sue no matsuyama	love shall know no breach
namu kosagi to wa!	till old ocean his wave
	heaves
	o'er Mount Sue's piney
	leaves!

KINOURA MOTOSUKU (980)

Taki no to wa	Though the waterfall
taete hisashiku	In its flow ceased long ago,
narinuredo	(now so silent all)
na koso nagarete	yet in name 'twill ever
nao kikoe kere!	flow,
	and in fame its music
	grow!

KINTO (1041)

Arazaran	After I am gone
kono yo no hoka no	beyond this world of pity,
omoide ni	I crave boon but one
ima hito-tabi no	that somehow a way may
au koto mo gana!	be
	found to meet once more
	with thee!

IZUMI SHIKIBU (1050)

Morotomi ni	Let us be merry
aware to omoe	in tender thought to-
yamazakura	gether,
hana yori hoka ni	sweet mountain cherry
shiru hito mo nashi!	other than one another
	no friend have we, my
	brother!

GYOSON (1100)

## EXAMPLES OF HEIAN PROSE

"He went into the house, the moon was so bright that he could see at a glance the real state of things. The whole place was hopelessly overgrown, even worse than he had been told. The heart of the old man, to whom the care of the place had been entrusted, must have been as waste as the place itself. The pine trees close by, in five years, had overgrown as much as in a thousand, half the branches were dead, and the young ones all in confusion. Almost everything was the same, and everybody offered sympathy. He recalled especially how the little daughter was born in that house, in its beloved interior, and how sad it was now that she had not returned with the family. The sailors and others were talking loudly as they embraced their children, and at that his grief was more than he could bear."

TSURAYUKI, A.D. 935

*Tosa Nikki*

"In ancient times the mikados themselves on spring mornings when the cherry trees were all in bloom, and on moonlight nights in autumn, used to invite their courtiers and have them compose poems suitable to the occasion."

Preface to the *Kokinshu*

"In the evening the young prince went to the mansion of his father-in-law, where his espousal was celebrated with much splendour. To the Sadaïjin the youthfulness of the handsome prince was very



pleasing, but the bride, who was some years older than the prince, felt the disparity of age, and blushed at the thought of it. Genji still resided in the palace. His bride, the Lady Aoi, had few charms for him, and the Princess Wisteria much more occupied his thoughts.

MURASAKI SHIKIBI A.D. 1000

*Genji Monogatari I.*

*Kiritsubo*

Genji — "I have but late discovered how difficult it is to meet a fair creature of whom one can say, Here at last is perfection."

Samo — "At a time when I was in a humble position, there was a girl that took my fancy. She was not a beauty, and so my youthful vanity did not let me pledge myself to her definitely. Yet from fits of indecision I wandered among others, which she always fiercely resented, until I sought a sweeter temper and more moderation."

*Ibid*, II, *Samo-no Iami*

"Her dress was of dark purple. Over her shoulders was thrown a scarf. The figure was slight and delicate. Her hands prettily shaped and tiny, and she used them with gentle reserve, half covering them. [The other lady] was dressed in thin white silk with an outer vestment, worked with red and blue flowers, thrown over it, and a crimson sash about her waist. Her bosom was partly revealed, the skin unusually fair, the figure was stout but tall, the head and neck in good proportion, and the lips and eyelids lovely."

*Ibid* *Woottsusemi*

"Is it not always true that reality and sincerity are to be preferred to merely artificial excellence?"

Pictures such as those of Mount Hori, which have never been seen by mortal eyes, or of some raging, monstrous fish in a rough sea, or some wild animal of a distant country, the imaginary face of a demon, often drawn with such striking vividness that people are startled at the sight, are neither real nor true. Ordinary scenery of familiar mountains, of quiet streams, of cottages about us, may be sketched with skill and charm that rival nature itself. In such pictures the perspective of gentle mountain slopes, and leafy sequestered nooks, are drawn with such admirable fidelity to nature that they lift one's imagination to something beyond them. Such pieces reveal the spirit and effectiveness of the master-hand, where an inferior artist would only show the dullness of ineptitude."

*Ibid*

"How cruel it is to consign a child one loves to the office of a priest! Very unhappy it must make him to be obliged to disregard the things he likes most. He is compelled to go to bed after a bit of miserable fasting diet, and is blamed if he even peeps at a pretty girl. Should he come to be an exorcising priest his life is especially hard. What a labour it must be to drive out the evil spirit from a sick man? When summoned he puts on a consequential air, as he hands around his maces and balls to the company present. Then he drones his incantations like a cicada. Suppose

that the demon is in no way disturbed, and the spells are ineffective! The household joining in the prayers wonder at the delay. Still the poor priest persists hour after hour, to utter exhaustion. Seeing eventually that it is useless he lifts himself up, collects his moccas and bell, runs his fingers through his hair, scratches his head and yawns, and rushes away to sleep an utter failure."

SEI SHON AGON (A.D. 1000) *Mahe no Soshi*

"The Mikado's august Cat in waiting was a charming pet, and so great a favourite with him that he bestowed upon her the fifth rank of the nobility, with the title *Miyobu-no Otodo*, meaning Chief Supervisor of the Female Attendants of the Palace. On a certain day she wandered out on the bridge connecting the two palace buildings, when the lady in charge of her shouted, 'You rude thing! Return at once!' But the cat gave no heed and went on basking drowsily in the sun. 'Where is Okinamaro?' cried the nurse, to frighten her and she hissed for the dog. The stupid dog thought she was in earnest, and rushed at the cat which in terror jumped behind the screen of the room where the Mikado then happened to be. His Majesty arose with a shudder greatly agitated. Taking the cat into his bosom, he summoned Tada-taka, the chamberlain, and commanded that the dog should be well thrashed and exiled to the island of dogs. Amid much confusion, with great difficulty Okinamaro was caught and sent to his place of banishment."

*Ibid*

" There is nothing, perhaps, that people appreciate so much as a little sympathy, especially men, but women like it too. Unkind remarks are always followed by regret, however unintentionally they may be uttered. It is not necessary actually to share in another's trouble in order to be able to say, ' Ah, it's too bad, isn't it ? ' to the unfortunate, or, ' I know what he is suffering ', to one who is worried. The effect is better if people hear of your sympathy for them from others. But some way should be found to let people know of your sympathy for them. Relatives, of course, take the usual inquiries for granted and give you no credit, but kind words to those not expecting them are sure to please. Though this seems all very obvious, there are yet apparently few who act upon it. It is even supposed that sympathetic souls are apt to be a bit soft, and that the ill-natured are the brainy people. Possibly there are many clever people who are nice, if we could only find them "

*Ibid*

" It is agreeable to me to live ever in anticipation of interesting events, especially at night when almost anything is likely to occur. Constantly through the night footsteps are heard in the corridors outside the room. Then a pause comes, in front of some room, until a finger-tap echoes gently on the door. The lady inside at once understands whose knock it is. Sometimes this timid tapping has to go on quite a time, the lady pretending sleep. At last the rustling of clothes, or movements in a bed, proclaim that she has pitied and admitted him.

In the warm season the moving of his fan is easily heard as he impatiently waits outside, in the cold weather, no matter how quietly she pokes the fire-box, he will hear it, and, knocking louder, will insistently demand admission. Meanwhile he can be heard pressing ever closer against the door."

*Ibid*

"The manner in which a lover takes his leave has much to do with the pleasure or annoyance he causes. He should not betray too great an anxiety to get up, but wait for a hint. Oh, it is daylight! It won't do for you to be found here, will it? Even then he ought to show a distinct disinclination to leave, and behave as if there was nothing he loathed so much. Having got up he should not all at once start drawing on his trousers, but should bend over his mistress and whisper some final word left unsaid during the night. Still, it must not be taken amiss that he should be seen fastening his girdle. After which he should push aside the shutters and wait for his lady to go to the door with him, when he should remark to her how he hates the day that separates him from her, and longs for the return of night. As he moves off she can then follow him with a longing eye, thinking how delightful he was even when taking leave. The man who roughly jumps up and fussily fastens his clothes, or hastily arranges the sleeves of his robe or coat, collecting his numerous things and shoving them into his clothing, and then tightens up his girdle again, well, he is simply hateful."

"The people had an uneasy feeling, for strange rumours were about. In the Palace there was fasting and religious devotion, there was a sudden revival of religion, some wanted to become nuns, others priests. Hearing this, the Mikado himself became depressed and mourned the transiency of life. One of his more beautiful wives died, and he ascribed it to her sins in a previous existence. But who could avert such things? Stirred by such profound thought, his heart was agitated. The Prime Minister sorrowfully noted the Mikado's demeanour, and the Mikado's uncle was deeply distressed over it. The priest Gonkyu was frequently sent for to expound the scriptures, the Mikado betook himself to religion beyond measure. One night he suddenly disappeared. Everyone procured a light and he was sought everywhere.

Nowhere was he to be seen. The Prime Minister lay in prostration before the shrine and poured out lamentations to the gods. The parties despatched to all the Buddhist temples failed to find any trace of him. The imperial consorts wept over the awful thing that had happened. The Prime Minister finally sought him at Kwazan, there he was found, clothed as a dear little priest. He fell down before him in grief, and then followed his example and became a monk."

AKAZOME YLIMON (1088)

*The Yeigwa Monogatari*

### III

## MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

(1200-1600)

From the beginning of the twelfth to the end of the sixteenth century Japan was subjected to almost incessant civil war, the country was a battlefield whereon puissant families, like the Taira and the Minamoto, contended for the dictatorship, the imperial Court ceased to be a political factor in the life of the nation, and with its decline in influence literature suffered accordingly. Culture was necessarily neglected and social conditions were not conducive to the production of literature, for the main inspiration of art is sympathy. Learning was driven into the monasteries, and literature became a priestly craft, impregnated with sectarian or political flavour. Buddhism flourished by contracting the martial spirit, great temples were erected and adorned with bronze ornaments and statuary. Intercourse with Korea and China

was interrupted, and piratical raids of Japanese on the continent invited China's invasion of Japan. Religion and literature, already obsessed with the fatalism of paganism, became more pessimistic than ever, and pessimism saps the springs of literature and art. National conditions appeared to confirm the Buddhist axiom that life was not worth living. The vanity of wealth and power, and the uncertainty of all things, became the text of prose and poetry alike. Women almost vanish from literature altogether, the old love romances end, and we have only tales reflecting the warlike temper of the age.

One of the earliest works of the period, the *Gempei Seisuihi*, is in forty-eight volumes, and covers the struggle between the Taira and the Minamoto families during the latter half of the twelfth century. These families took the names Genji and Heike, derived from the Chinese ideographs of their autographs, and the conflict they continued was like that of the Guelphs and Ghibellines in Italy, or the Wars of the Roses in England. This early record of the conflict is not a history in the modern sense, but bears the same relation to that science as do the historical plays of



Shakespeare The speeches and sententious reflections of the generals and statesmen are evolved from the author's own inner consciousness, after the manner of the ancient Greek historians Historical points are adorned or illustrated by verse as occasion serves The work is, however, of some significance as literature, because the language indicates a considerable advance on previous efforts of the kind, and in style almost approaches modern Japanese prose Battle scenes are described in language that is vivid and precise, and in a manner recalling the *Iliad* The author's opinion of most of the characters with whom he deals may be inferred from the concluding sentence of the volumes "How true it is that Heaven may be reckoned upon, and earth may be reckoned upon the only thing that cannot be reckoned upon is the heart of man "

Another composition of the period, the *Heike Monogatari*, is concerned with the same subject, indeed it seems scarcely more than an imitation A few inventions are added for dramatic effect At times the language rises to poetic rhythm, as in Ossian, yet this is not long sustained But it was an interesting example of a sort of composition that was to

continue, and later develop into drama. The *Mizu-Kagami*, by an unknown author, attempted to narrate the national history from the beginning down to A.D. 850. It is mostly an epitome of the *Nihongi* for Japanese readers unable to read Chinese, and is of small value either as history or as literature. Though somewhat rhetorical and in places philosophical, the style is artless and often illogical, without much sense of either form or history, yet its comparative freedom from Chinese expressions indicates some degree of progress in the national language as a literary medium. The *Hogen* and the *Heiji* are *monogatari* recording civil disturbances of the middle of the twelfth century, when the Taira obtained a temporary domination of the Minamoto family.

The *Hojoki*, written by Chomei, guardian of the Kamo shrine at Kyoto, has considerable importance as literature, because of its excellence of style, being classical without too closely imitating the Chinese manner. It is but a small book of thirty pages, written in 1212, after the author had fled from the ravages of earthquake, fire and famine in the capital, and had taken refuge in a mountain hut where he lived as a hermit for thirty

years Most of his reflections on life are tinged with the sombreness of Buddhism, but his long sojourn amid the beauties of Nature gave him an intimacy with her moods that is almost Wordsworthian His descriptions of the lovely lakeside region among the vast green hills are often quite idyllic Here for the first time we have an example of that artistic, forcible and vivacious prose style in which Chinese words are blended with Japanese without doing violence to native modes of expression, a form of composition that was not to reach full consummation before the seventeenth century

The *Izayoi-no-ki* was a journal kept by Abutsu, a lady of imperial descent, and a widow of a Fujiwara noble, who had retired to a nunnery, it describes a journey she was obliged to undertake to the military capital at Kamakura to obtain justice for her son whose elder brother had attempted to defraud him The form resembles the *Tosa Nikki*, but the quality is less pretentious, yet its freedom from Chinese elements reminds us of the Heian literature Abutsu also wrote some critical essays on poetry, yet failed to continue the tradition of the Heian women for perfection of style The work is sufficient to show

that the voice of woman was not yet wholly silenced in literature, though it seems the last for many years

In spite of war the voice of poetry was not wholly extinct, for in the last half of the thirteenth century was published the noted anthology known as the *Hyakunin-issu* (Single Poems of a Hundred Men), giving an example of verse from each of the hundred poets. It included most of the more perfect *tanka* from the seventh to the thirteenth century, and was compiled about 1235 by a Court noble named Sadaiye, of the Fujiwara clan. This anthology may be read in an English translation by F. V. Dickins.

The Minamoto exterminated the Taira in 1185, dominated Japan until 1219, when the Hojo domination began and continued till 1337, and in turn gave way to the Ashikaga domination which lasted to 1573. During the still unsettled state of the country under the Hojo and Ashikaga usurpations the field of literature remained mostly barren, as in England between Chaucer and Shakespeare, with the exception of a few minor historical works, some pleasing essays, some dramatic sketches and the rise of the *No* or lyrical drama.

As a result of the dispute between two

claimants to the throne in the fourteenth century there were rival emperors for fifty years, and the *Jin'oshoto-ri* (History of the True Succession of the Divine Monarchs), written by Chikafusa Kitabatake, gives an account of the trouble. It begins with the mythic age and brings history down to contemporary date, but the work is more occupied with dissertations on politics and government than with real history. Its importance lies in the fact that it was the first attempt to apply philosophical principles to government, which must have seemed novel to the thought of the time. His patriotic stand for loyalty and the unity of the empire, in the face of unscrupulous family usurpation of imperial prerogative, had a lasting influence on Japanese history. Chikafusa doubtless realized the danger caused by introducing the Confucian principle of making right of sovereignty depend on ability to rule. He safeguards this by insisting on the importance of the sovereign finding the right man for the right place, and officials being placed according to their personal merit.

A similar work was the *Taiheiki*, which gave an account of how the emperor Go Daigo attempted to free the central government

from the interference of the Kamakura shoguns, and of the consequent civil wars. The author was a priest of the Hiyozan monastery at Kyoto, named Kojima, who died in 1374. His work is obviously based more upon imagination than on history, and has numerous interpolations unrelated to the period. Record of Great Peace (*Taiheiki*) is a remarkable title for one of the most belligerent eras in the nation's history, but this may not have been the original title. It is not the composition of a historian but of a literary man bent on producing a fine piece of romantic prose. On account of Kojima's constant allusion to Chinese history and his use of Chinese phrases, the style seems inflated and pedantic, and he introduces the conflicting principles of Shinto, Confucianism and Buddhism without any attempt to reconcile them. His use of some long poetry, in alternate lines of five and seven syllables, influenced drama later. Thus on account of its use of poetry and a harmonizing of Chinese with Japanese idioms, the *Taiheiki* is more important as a literary influence than for its intrinsic merit as history or even literature. Its good and bad qualities have found reflection in Japanese prose ever since.

Amid the arid wastes of this period there is one delightful oasis, the *Tsure-dzure gusa*, a collection of sketches, short tales and essays, composed by Kenko-boshi, a man of good family, tracing its descent back even to Deity. Kenko was a monk with a double personality—now a polished, shrewd and cynical man of the world, and now a pious though not saintly devotee of his religion. He thinks piety impossible save in seclusion, yet even there he never attains to holy calm. Nor indeed was Nirvana ever his ideal of life. The title of his book implies that it was written to relieve the tedium (*tsure-dzure*) of existence. But his style and language are more purely Japanese than most of the contemporary compositions, and his simplicity and ease of expression had a favourable effect on subsequent writing. Though there are no poems in the volume, Kenko has a high reputation among the national poets.

Naturally these centuries of strife produced some great characters, especially soldiers, whose courage and skill in arms appealed to the dramatic impulse of the nation. To meet this the old religious plays began to assume a more secular form and motive, changing into what is called the *No*, or lyrical drama,

as the English Miracle Plays, did into the Morality Plays, and for the same reason. The No plays are mostly dateless, but they first appeared in the fourteenth century, and were probably the work of priests who used them to interest the uninterested in religion and morals, as the Church used our Morality Plays. Drama in Japan, as in ancient Greece, and in England, was in its beginning closely associated with religion. It is an evolution from the *kagura*, a pantomimic dance performed to the sound of fife and drum at the Shinto festivals for the delectation of Deity. With dancing the gods had always been delighted. Away back in the mythic ages the Sun Goddess who had hidden in a cave through anger, and left the world in darkness, was induced to come forth by a dance performed in front of her retreat. When spoken dialogue was added to the *kagura* dance and music, the No drama was born. The new drama soon attracted official attention and won the approval of the shogun and the daimyo. Hundreds of these lyrical dramas are in existence, the hero of the play is usually a monk. They are of as much value for their lyrical as for their religious significance, for poetry of a kind characterizes



all of them. But it is not poetry in the classical sense, being deficient in form, lucidity, coherence and method. They also reveal a wealth of folklore, legend, quaint fancy and religious sentiment, unknown to classical verse. But the *No* has too little action to be really dramatic, and the plot is often negligible. After the sixteenth century interest in religious plays lessened, and the *No* ceased to be written. Like the Mystery and the Morality dramas of England, the *No* gave way before the demand for a play in the sense of play, not playing at religion but at real life. Just as our medieval drama attempted to save its seriousness by introducing interludes of a farcical nature, so the *No* tried to relieve stress and sustain interest by bringing in interludes called *kyogen*, a kind of farce in the colloquial, but brief and simple in construction. Yet the development of modern drama did not come until much later.

It is obvious that the *No* and the *Kyogen* are of more interest from a dramatic than a literary point of view, but their effect on literature was sufficient to make them worth some attention. The lyrical drama arose æsthetically from an attempt to make the native *tanka* in some sense dramatic, and so

it was turned into something quite distinct, a lyrical play. This gave some possibility of epic and action, but that it was unsatisfactory is plain from the evolution of real drama later. The form and limit of the classical poetry precluded dramatic action save by a sort of sonnet sequence consisting of five and seven syllable lines in alternation, which would be intolerably monotonous. The possibility of dramatic recitation was evolved from the practice of the monks, or *bonzes*, chanting dramatic extracts from the *Heike Monogatari*, a literary account of the civil strife between the two powerful rival families, the Taira and the Minamoto, known in Japanese history as the Heike and the Genji. Similar works, like the *Gempei Seisuiiki* and the *Taiheiki*, also proved fruitful sources of historical exploits fit for dramatic recitation. These new developments could not be brought within the sphere of the *No* drama without destroying it. From its first appearance it was religious, as we have seen, and its main aim and motive remained propitiatory of Deity. The best exhibitions of it were always at the chief Shinto shrines, especially those at Isé, Ōmi, Tamba and Nara. Eventually the *No* found its chief patrons among the feudal lords,

especially the shogun, who supported it in the same way that the imperial Court promoted the *tanka*, or classical poetry. The *No* became one of the principal forms of æsthetic entertainment at the Court of the shogun. Kiyotsugu, one of the earliest masters of the *No* theatre at Nara, received liberal patronage from the Ashikaga shoguns, and a similar policy was pursued by Hideyoshi in the sixteenth century. Owing to this influence performances of the lyrical drama became ceremonies of State, the chief actors often being young gentlemen of the noble or the samurai class, as is still the fact. Some of the present descendants of the ancient nobility of Japan still wear, in *No* performances, the identical silk brocades that robed their ancestors centuries ago in the same plays.

Most of the 235 *No* plays in the *Yo-kyoku Tsugé* are assigned to the fifteenth century. But apart from the very few ascribed to Kiyotsugu and his successor, the rest are as anonymous as our old ballads, and quite as impersonal too, representing a school of writers rather than individual authorship. But the primary motive of all is piety, at times evolving into patriotic or martial feeling or love of nature. The influence of the *No*

on literature was mainly in the direction of poetry. Not actually poetry itself, the *No* play is usually poetic in motive and treatment, but the purely lyrical passages are mostly in the metre and diction of prose. The five and seven syllable phrases found in the plays seldom rise to the quality of poetry, the possibility being further marred by the addiction to Chinese words. Attempts at ornament also include the use of the pillow-words and pivot-words which we have seen to be the devices of some poetry. To the Japanese mind these devices of technique appeal to a degree impossible to us, they seem like a series of dissolving views, vague, graceful and suggestive, as Dr Aston affirms. Nor in the lyrical drama is there any great degree of originality, either in matter or treatment. All grain is grist to the author's mill, whether it comes from the *tanka* of the national anthologies or the Buddhist scriptures, for plagiarism is no offence in Japanese literature, any more than it was in Elizabethan England.

It is, perhaps, sufficient to say that the *No* did do something to afford a wider scope for expression of poetic, dramatic and even epic sentiment than was possible to the *tanka*, it

is naturally perfumed with the mysticism that always flowers from breaking bounds. Rigid dogma in literature, as in religion, inevitably breaks as life advances. But what the lyrical drama gained in freedom and soaring vision, it seemed to lose in lucidity, method and coherence, as we have said. It revels in a world of legendary lore, quaint fancy and religious sentiment, precluded by classical verse. If the *tanka* is a flower or a jewel, the *No* is a flower-garden or a rockery. But Japanese literature fell away from the *No*, as English literature did from the Morality play, or the Pastoral, because all that was good in these modes evolved into better forms and uses. Consequently after the sixteenth century the *No* drama ceased to be written, though not to be performed. By that time Japanese society had been diverted by Chinese philosophy from Buddhist and Shinto views of life, and the mind of the nation turned to secular drama for adequate exposition of its ideas and conduct.

The fact that the *kyogen*, or farce, had to be introduced to relieve the intolerable monotony of the *No*, as Heywood introduced his interludes about the same time to add amusement to our Miracle and Morality plays,

shows that the Japanese conception of drama needed improvement as much as the English. The *kyogen* (mad words) contributed a distinctly comic element to the *No* stage. The authors of the lyrical drama had attempted to purify the people's pleasures by drawing them away from the licentious amusement of the *sarugaku*, or monkey dance, to the exquisitely beautiful lyrical play. But mankind must have something to laugh at, as well as to sigh and yearn over, and this the *No* audience found in these farcical skits. The *No* flourished chiefly at the shogun's capital, which, in the zenith of its popularity, was around the imperial capital at Kyoto. That is why the language of the *No* is written in the elegant and flowing language of the Court, while that of the *kyogen* is in the colloquial dialect of the contemporary peasantry. Of this sort of farce there were three types, representing the Okura, the Sagi and the Idzumi schools. The virtue of the new dramatic element was that it gave to action precedence over talk. One of the traditional weaknesses of drama, we know, is to give talk precedence to movement, and this is why the *kyogen* is as much a necessity of the Japanese stage to-day as it was in the sixteenth

century The kinema goes to the opposite extreme, and is all movement But the authors of medieval Japanese drama aimed to provide the actor with an opportunity for action rather than elocution This is also why the Japanese actor indulges in a dancing, or rhythmic motion, which is more important in the interpretation of the play than his recitation The development of this type of play in an age of incessant civil strife and heroic action showed how alive to psychological possibilities was the national stage A study of the *kyogen* will reveal the interesting fact that the Japanese playwright of that time had a better idea of what a comic situation was, than is to be found in Chaucer, Rabelais or Boccaccio The humour was broad, to be sure, but it managed to be so without being vulgar, a triumph, however, which did not continue It is remarkable, too, that these farces find their theme in the doings of ordinary folk, a world of farmers, peasants and priests and all sorts of funny people as well In Professor Yaichi Haga's *Kyogen Niyuban* we find, among the twenty plays, there is only one character that belongs to the upper class It is evident, also, that in their criticism of life these plays represent the

women of the lower class as enjoying far greater freedom than those of the upper classes

The influence of the *kyogen* on dramatic literature was not only in its apt introduction of the comic element and the language and theme, but in the technique of drama. The authors of the *kyogen* were extremely ingenious in preparation for the catastrophe, and in exciting the audience to anticipation. The characters are brought on the stage in a natural and easy manner, at once establish their identity, and then begin at once to act in harmony with their character. In the farce *Kaminari* (The Thunder God) we have the case of a quack doctor who lost his patients through the arrival of properly qualified practitioners, so he moves to a more congenial neighbourhood. A thunder storm comes on by the way and he takes shelter in a mulberry field. Amid blinding rain comes a terrific crash of thunder, and the thunder god, who had missed his footing in stepping from one cloud to another, falls on the middle of the stage where he groans with an injured spine. He appeals to the quack for help, but he demurs that he can treat only human beings, and not gods. After being threatened



by the vengeance of heaven the quack agrees to try, he feels the divine patient's pulse and examines his tongue, in the usual professional manner. His diagnosis is that it is a case of excess of wind, a trouble natural to the god of storms, and, having no medicine by him, the quack prescribes a puncture. But when he jabs his needle into the god's body the patient howls with pain. The quack urges him to be brave, and sticks in the needle again. After this ordeal the god recovers, and to avoid the treatment again, he rewards the doctor with a promise of three years' fine weather. Then he ascends to where he was before. This use of theological characters to induce laughter is not unlike our use of the devil, the vice and the villain in some of our medieval drama. But for economy of detail and material, together with swiftness of preparation and production of results greater and more surprising than could have been anticipated, few of our medieval plays could rival some of the *kyogen*.

"Yoshitsune and his troops in seven hundred ships began the attack at dawn. The enemy, though unprepared, moved forward to meet him, and the formal arrows of defiance were exchanged. Both sides numbered over 100,000 men, and the

din of battle, with the moan of the radish-headed arrows crossing each other's course, was terrific, echoing to the heights of heaven and the depths of the sea. Arriving from Kyushu with 30,000 cavalry, the Genji generals cut off retreat in that direction. The Heike were as caged birds, or even as fish in a trap, with no way of escape. Ships surrounded them by sea, and long lines of bridles by land, hemming them in from all four quarters.

The Heike leader addressed his men from a ship's prow and exhorted them to consider that day their last, and to harbour no thought of retreat.

Each was to abandon his life to death, and leave a worthy name to after ages. Yoshitsune, fancying his troops showed signs of faltering, rinsed his mouth with salt water, shut his eyes, folded his arms and prayed to Hachiman [the god of war]. A white dove suddenly appeared and alighted on Yoshitsune's flagstaff. Over the scene of battle black clouds came floating from the east, and from the clouds a white flag emerged, while the flag of Yoshitsune waved as it passed along the clouds. The Genji all joined hands in prayer, with hair erect, the Heike were stricken to the heart in panic."

HAMURO TOKINAGA (1190)

*The Gempei Seisunki*

"The current is incessant in its flow, but it is not the same water, the foam forms where the current pauses, then vanishes and forms again, but is never lasting. Such are all men and their dwellings. In our stately capital the mansions of the great and the cottages of the humble rise side by

side, and seem thus to continue from one generation to another. But inquiry will show that but few are old. New houses are erected where old ones perished, and great houses give place to smaller ones. So also is it with them that live in them. Even if one lives long in a place how many acquaintances has one long known? Every morning some one dies, every evening some one is born. So too is it with man's existence. Buddha has warned us not to suffer enslavement to the visible world. Even my devotion to this tiny hut of straw is wrong, to be able to lie down in peace is an obstacle to piety. Man should not dribble out his precious days in indulgent and futile ease.'

CHOMEI (1212) *The Hojō*

'For two years there was a dreadful famine. There was a succession of misfortunes. In spring and summer there was drought, in winter and autumn storms and floods, and no grain ripened. It was useless to plough in spring, or plant out rice, for it came to nothing. In reaping time the sickle was silent, nor was there any garnering for winter. The people left their provinces to seek subsistence elsewhere, some fled to the hills to wander about famishing. There was an outburst of religious devotion, but to no effect. The capital, which depended on the country for food, was no less distressed than elsewhere. Citizens offered their treasures, but no one would buy them, gold was of no value, and rice was gold. Beggars swarming along the roadside filled the air with lamentations. Survivors hoped for better things after the New Year, but, to make things worse,

then pestilence began and continued its decimation  
 People were like fish in a drying pool      Even  
 the aristocracy were seen begging from door to  
 door      Lying by walls and fences were hun-  
 dreds of those who died of starvation, the atmo-  
 sphere was foul with decaying flesh      Infants  
 were seen clinging to the breasts of dead mothers,  
 not knowing they were orphans      Priests went  
 about writing the Amida ideograph on the brows  
 of the dead to ensure them Buddhahood      In  
 the fourth and fifth months more than 42,300  
 died      ”

*Ibid*

“ It is the duty of every one born in this imperial  
 country to be ever earnestly loyal to the ruler,  
 even unto death      Nor is anyone to take any credit  
 to himself for so doing      But to encourage those who  
 come after, and in devoted remembrance of the dead,  
 the sovereign bestows rewards in recognition of  
 valour      The inferior should not be tempted to rival  
 the superior, nor the superior evince inordinate pride  
 or ambition      In truth it is a wise principle to  
 keep an eye on the rut made by preceding chariot  
 wheels, and keep in it at all costs      Several  
 principles of statesmanship I have mentioned      All  
 of them are founded on justice and mercy, to dis-  
 pense which demands firm will and action      And  
 such is clearly the teaching of the Sun Goddess  
 Firm action is manifested in various ways, but  
 chiefly by making a wise choice of officials, for  
 Japan agrees with the Chinese policy of first finding  
 the best man and then appointing him      Again,  
 wisdom is shown in the exclusion of private motives

when distributing offices in provinces and districts, which should always be done on grounds of reason only. Firm action is also shown in a faithful rewarding of merit and punishment of crime, for then virtue is encouraged and wickedness suppressed. Neglect of any of these implies bad government."

CHIKARUSA (1351) *Jinkoshoto* :

"Among the many incomprehensible things in the world one is the pleasure some find in making other people drink against their will, as is done on so many occasions. The victim appears to acquiesce, then frowns in distress, and awaits a chance to spill the liquor and disappear. But he is recaptured, held and compelled to drink his share, without any consideration of his feelings. Thus the best of men become fools and are overtaken by absurd conduct. Strong, robust men, in our very presence, sink into helplessness and lie down unconscious of past and future alike. What a pitiful method of celebrating an occasion of festivity! It is neither kind nor even courteous for men to treat each other in this manner. Strong drink has much to answer for, it wastes our means and destroys our health."

KENKO (1350) *The Tzure-dzure-gusa*

"We all dismounted and attempted to push our way through the crowd to the rails, but the crush was beyond us. Just then we caught sight of a priest who had climbed into a tree and sat in a fork to get a better view. But he had wearied himself and began to doze, dropping his head and then

waking up with a start just in time to keep himself from toppling over. This excited the jeers of all who saw him. 'He must be a fool,' said some one, 'to be dozing on so precarious a perch.' At that it just occurred to me to exclaim, 'Yet are we any wiser, wasting our time in such a place as this, knowing that soon time for us must end?' The people in front of me all looked back, and some one remarked, 'True, indeed! What utter folly to be here at all! Come this way, sir!' And then people stood back a little and allowed me to come forward. Well, that casual remark of mine might have been uttered by anybody. It was the unexpectedness of it that made the impression. The human heart is not of wood or stone, the right word at the right moment will always find its way there."

*Ibid*

"It is not only when we gaze with our eyes at the moon or the flowers that they give us pleasure. On a beautiful spring day while we are in the house, or a beautiful moonlight night while we remain in our room, the mere thought of them brings joy and delight."

*Ibid*

"Among things in very bad taste I include too much furniture in a living-room, too many pens on a stand, too many Buddhas in a private shrine, too many rocks, trees and herbs in a garden, too many children in a house, too many words when people meet, but too many books in a book-case there can never be, nor too much litter in a rubbish heap."

*Ibid*

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"What strikes a man's eye most of all in a woman is the beauty of her hair Her quality and disposition he learns from her speech, even though he cannot see her Her posture when seated, too, may deeply impress a man's heart Once she steals his heart, he braves death itself to give love its consummation All ages, wise or foolish, become the slaves of passion, for its depths are measureless and its source beyond knowledge."

*Ibid*

"When Kaito observed this he exclaimed, 'The enemy is few, let us scatter them before their rearguard arrives!' Upon which he unsheathed his forty-two inch sword, and, holding aloft his armoured left sleeve as an arrow-guard, he rushed into the midst of the battle, and soon three of the enemy were despatched Returning to the lake beach he rallied his followers Now came forward Kwaijutsu, the Okamoto monk, who had espied him from a distance, and kicking over the *lappa* shield, with his thirty-two-inch bill revolving like a water-wheel, he sprang at Kaito who received the stroke on his left arm, and with his right Kaito aimed a splitting blow at his adversary's helmet, but it glanced off to his shoulder His attempt to repeat the blow was so fierce that his stirrup-strap broke, and he nearly lost his mount As he was recovering his balance the monk thrust his bill through Kaito's helmet two or three times, stabbing him through the windpipe, and he fell headlong from his horse Placing his foot on the armour of the fallen man, the monk seized his hair, and decapitated him, fixing the head on the

point of his bill                      As he stood there a boy of fifteen years or so came out and rushed at the monk with his sword, but, being a monk, he hesitated to cut down the lad, yet, while they parried, an arrow from approaching soldiers pierced the boy's heart and he fell never to rise. He turned out to be Kaito's eldest son. When Kaito's men saw what had happened, they felt that, with the heads of their leader and his son taken, they must not return home alive. Bridle to bridle they rushed into the battle, determined to fall fighting, and to make the body of their fallen lord their pillow."

THE PRIEST KOJIMA (1368)    *The Taiheriki*

Poetry from the *No* drama, *Takasago*, by Motokiyo, A.D. 1455

On the four seas  
still are the waves,  
the world is at peace  
soft blow the time-winds,  
rustling not the branches  
In such an age  
blest are the very firs,  
in that they meet  
to grow old together  
Vain indeed  
are reverend upward looks,  
vain even are words to tell  
our thanks that we were born  
in such an age,  
rich with the bounty  
of our sovereign lord



The dawn is near,  
and the hoar-frost falls  
on the fir-tree twigs ,  
but the leaves' dark green  
suffer no change  
Morning and evening  
beneath the shade  
the leaves are swept away,  
yet they never fail  
True it is  
that these fir-trees  
shed not their leaves ,  
their verdure remains fresh  
for ages long,  
as the Masaka trailing vine ,  
Even among ever-green trees—  
the emblem of unchangeableness—  
exalted is their fame  
as a symbol to the end of time—  
the fame of the trees  
that have grown old together

*Tran G W Aston*

# IV

## FEUDAL LITERATURE

(1600-1868)

WITH the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate at the beginning of the seventeenth century peace and stable government continued for nearly three hundred years, during which time schools were improved and increased in number, with a distinct revival of learning and a greatly extended culture, the result being highly favourable to literature. It was the influence of literature, indeed, that led to the abolition of the shogunate and restoration of imperial rule. Influenced by the example of Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Tokugawa house, the various territorial nobles had their special schools for the promotion of learning. Civilization again came under the influence of Chinese classics and philosophy, with renewed devotion to Confucian ethics, ever serviceable to feudal rule. Under Ieyasu was organized the most perfect form of feudal

government ever known. The new capital of the shogun at Yedo outshone the imperial capital at Kyoto, and became the centre of intellectual development in every way, there the scholars, artists and poets concentrated for more than two hundred years. With the extension of education books enjoyed a wider range, and authors were not left to depend wholly on private patronage. Since much of the new literature was unethical, the change was evil as well as good. Buddhism declined in influence, while Shinto experienced revival, as the spirit of nationalism intensified with the renascence of the old classics.

Literature began to expand rapidly in more diversified directions, and to grow voluminous. Works of history, biography, essays, fiction, drama and poetry were no less common than treatises on politics and religion. For a nation averse from metaphysics, there was a phenomenal return to the conflicting philosophies of China, and disputes between the exponents of Chu-Hi and Wang-Yang-Ming were as contentious as between the Nominalist and Realist schoolmen of the medieval Europe. But books of all sorts flooded the market, for the printing press was now a national institution. Dictionaries, grammars and books of reference

abounded. The implements of scholarship were showing steady improvement. But while the new writing gained in extent it lost in quality and form. Marked by false sentiment, improbability, pedantry, platitudes, immorality, puns and conceits, it too often presented a dreary waste of detail in rather meretricious style. The most hopeful aspect of literature was its ample evidence of ability here and there, with signs of a sense of humour, and the possibility of wit and pathos, amid contents otherwise tame or morally objectionable. Out of this prodigious fertility of invention and range of thought a style not devoid of æsthetic value might evolve, provided authorship came to realize the need of a disciplined imagination and a greater sense of order and proportion.

The Japanese language was still in process of transition from medieval to modern form and structure, the more intensive civilization became, the more extensive was the vocabulary in demand, and the use of Chinese words was now so general that they appeared to exceed those of native origin. But the old, cumbrous grammatical system was being simplified and shaped into an instrument more fitted for literary use, while the ver-

nacular continued to fall further away from the written language, a considerable disadvantage to progress. Later there appears a closer approximation between the written and the spoken language, owing to the influence of fiction and the press. But it was obvious at the beginning of this period that prose had to make much greater progress in style and form if it was to prove true to the idiom and construction of the Japanese language as a literary instrument, and thus it fortunately attained towards the close of the period.

Among the earliest of the more important compositions of the Tokugawa era was the *Taikoki*, a biography of Hideyoshi, the Napoleonic hero to whom Ieyasu succeeded. But its importance lay more in being a valuable source of contemporary documents than as an example of national prose. The best prose of the early period was from the pens of the *kangakusha*, or Chinese scholars, whom the shogun gathered around him for the building up of his social and political fabric on the basis of Confucian ethics and policy. After exercising a potent influence on native life and thought for some years, these Chinese scholars met with spirited opposition from

the *wagakusha*, or Japanese scholars, who contend that the nation should study its own classics and have its own religion and policy, as against all things foreign

One of the first and most eminent of these Chinese scholars was Fujiwara Seikwa, born in 1560, and a descendant of the great family of that name Both in poetry and prose he won high distinction, for many years commanding wide influence as a teacher of Chinese philosophy As his lectures were based on the expositors of Confucius and Mencius, his influence was more on the thought and content of literature than on its form, for he left little of his own composition But through him was made known to Japan the philosophical works of the Tsung schoolmen of China

The Tsung philosophy found vogue during the rule of the dynasty of that name in China (960-1280), and gradually filtered into Japan through a study of the Chinese classics Its most distinguished Chinese exponent was Chu-hi, or Chutze, who wrote commentaries on the national sages, Confucius and Mencius, covering ethics, government, natural philosophy and a system of ontology He contended that the Great Absolute, the *Tai-ki*,

is the origin of all things, the movement of this divine energy created *Yang* which, at rest, became *Yin*, the one being the active or male principle, and the other the passive or female principle. By the mutual interaction of *Yang* and *Yin*, creation evolved into what it is. The five elements on which the positive and negative principles work are water, fire, earth, metal and wood, the process being eternal, as there is no such thing as creation, in our sense. The underlying energy of evolution he called *Ki*, or *K'ue*, which means breath, and follows fixed laws which he termed *Li*. So far as there is in this system any conception of Deity it appears to be impersonal. But Heaven (*Ten*) is spoken of as in command of will, knowledge, anger and punishment, which is *Tendo*, the Way of Heaven. The social ethics arising out of this philosophy imply five relations, whereby the inferior is invariably subject to the superior, a very useful principle in feudal society. Great stress is laid on duty, but it is the duty of the lower to the higher. Superiors have rights but no duties, inferiors have duties but no rights. But the higher is under obligation to set a good example to the lower, and then deal out reward and punishment accordingly.

On this philosophy the feudal society of Japan was based and governed

This philosophy permeates much of the literature of the feudal period, meeting with little opposition until the rise of the *wagakusha*, or native scholars later. The *samurai*, or warrior, was the ideal gentleman of the time, he is often the hero in fiction and drama, illustrating implicit obedience to his feudal lord, for the public to emulate. Loyalty was not national but feudal or provincial, it was to the lord rather than to the sovereign, and the lord was supposed to be an incarnation of loyalty to the throne, though it was really to the shogun, through whom alone loyalty to the ruler could be expressed. Confucian ethics sanctioned the duty of revenge it became the duty of the individual to avenge any insult to his own or his lord's family, filial piety demanded it. And so vendetta underlies the plot or motive of innumerable tales and dramas. Chastity was for women rather than for men, and this principle also figures prominently in contemporary literature. At this time woman was more in subservience to man than at any period before or since in the nation's history, and the result is seen in fiction and drama. The



brothel was considered a safeguard to the purity of the home, harlotry became an institution, as it still is. The gay lady was conspicuous in the fiction of the time. Literature suffered from the rigid conventions of society, it was over-regulated in the same manner, and became as stunted as a trimmed hedge, while poverty, injustice and general distress deprived society of the mutual sympathy essential to wholesome literature.

Both in matter and form the influence of Chinese philosophy was inimical to the development of national literature. One of the more prominent disciples of Seikwa was Doshun (1583-1657), famed as an omnivorous reader. Yet out of his 150 volumes of miscellaneous essays very little could be appraised as literature. His son, Hayashi Shunsai (1618-1680) compiled a history of Japan entitled *Odai-ichiran*, of little significance for its literary qualities. Among the more important of subsequent *kangakusha* was Kaibara Yekken (1630-1714) who began as a physician, doubtless with some element of Dutch learning, as the Hollanders still traded at Nagasaki and all knowledge of foreign medicine came through the doctor there, but Kaibara finally settled down as an author and lecturer at

Kyoto, producing over a hundred works on the Chinese classics. His manly, vigorous style, devoid of ornament and frivolity, left a favourable effect on literary composition, though his works are marred by the diffuseness and repetition of the day. The tone is always moral and dignified, with a wholesome outlook on life. He was also appreciated as a poet.

By far the most celebrated of these scholars was Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725) who dominated intellectual circles in Yedo during the second half of the seventeenth century. His autobiography, *Ori-taku-shiba* (Burning Faggots) appeared in 1716, and gave a vivid and interesting account of his own upbringing, with pleasant glimpses of an old samurai household, the "faggots" being an allusion to the cremation that eventually comes to all. Arai had an adventurous experience, passing from patron to patron until his genius at last found full recognition by the shogun Iyenobu before whom he lectured on the Chinese classics. His greatest literary work was the *Hankampu*, composed in 1701, recounting the history of the various feudatories from 1600 to 1680. Though its thirty volumes were hastily written, they contain not only

valuable material for the historian, but present an elegance and vigour of style that forms a favourable contrast to much of the contemporary writing. Official conceptions of freedom did not permit publication of the work until some of the *daimyo* it so faithfully depicted had passed away. Arai also wrote the *Tokushi Yoron*, a history of Japan from the beginning, it was of great importance in revealing for the first time the connection between cause and effect in the various revolutionary changes during the nation's development. As trusted adviser to the shogun Arai had great influence on the improvement of justice and finance, he was the most distinguished economist and financier of his day. But the three hundred prose works he left behind him affected literature in a moral and intellectual more than in any other way.

Muro Kyuso (1658-1735), a professor of Chinese in Yedo, displayed more talent for scholarship than for literature. His *Shundai Zatsuwa*, or Miscellaneous Talk, reveals the rationalistic effect of the Tsung philosophy on Buddhism with which it was in many ways inconsistent. He was opposed to polytheism and superstition in religion, and set the Stoical spirit of Confucianism against the fatal-

istic and acquiescent attitude of Buddhism. Instead of retiring from the world man should conquer and ride it in his own interests, and the strong should rule the weak without mercy. Though overfond of learned allusions to Chinese history, the works of Kyuso were a wholesome influence against the immoral literature of the day. In his appreciation of divine intelligence he more nearly approaches the conception of a personal deity than any of his contemporaries among the *kangakusha*.

While these Chinese scholars were writing for the intellectual few, the *wagakusha*, or Japanese scholars, were appealing to the masses now beginning to read books. Ignoring philosophy at first, the *wagakusha* concerned themselves with an intense nationalism, as against things Chinese and foreign. Their media were poetry, fiction and drama, and a general exposition of the ancient classics of Japan. Great cities like Yedo, Kyoto and Osaka were now literary centres, with their printing establishments, and an increasing demand for books. Society was rigidly divided into four classes—samurai, artisans, peasants and merchants, ranking in the order named. Literature had now to make a popular appeal. Since the Heian era fiction

experienced but slow progress. Nor was there much sign of advance during the seventeenth century. The *Mokuzu Monogatari* was merely a melodramatic romance of love and jealous passion unfit for modern eyes. The *Usuyuki Monogatari* and the *Hannosuhe-no-soshi* were tales occupied with similar unsavoury themes.

Ibara Saikaku distinguished himself by reviving the literature of contemporary life and manners, not known since the Heian era. His first appeal to the public was as a composer of *hakka* verse, a diminutive poem of seventeen syllables, but he soon turned to graceful prose in description of life in the city lupanars, his work eventually became so gross that it had to be officially suppressed. But his style was fresh and prophetic, indeed what the nation had long awaited. Ibara preferred stories of the Enoch Arden type, and he also wrote gossip sketches of fellow poets, that were very attractive. The most pleasant aspect of the seventeenth-century fiction are the numerous tales for children, which are still in popular circulation. Most of them are authorless folktales, like the *Nedzumi-no-Yomeiri* (Rat's Wedding), the *Saru-hani Kassen* (Battle of the Ape and Crab), and

the *Shitakiri Susume* (Tongue-cut Sparrow) which have a universal appeal and charm. Some of them have been translated into English.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century two men named Jisho and Kiseki collaborated in the production of a new kind of popular fiction which came to be known as *Hachimonjya*, the name of the office of publication in Osaka. Later these authors quarrelled and separated, but continued to write independently. Most of these novels were extremely indecent, dealing almost exclusively with life in the brothels of Kyoto and elsewhere. To the public this aspect of society was more interesting than the rigidly conventional manners of the upper classes where women were not allowed to see any men but their near relatives. Though the tone of the new fiction was distinctly immoral, its wit and vivacity were undeniable. In fear of the official censor some of the volumes improved in tone, while the *Kintan* (1711) was decidedly low, the *Oyaji Katagi* was much less so, being racy sketches of the gourmand and the pleasure-seeker. Kiseki turned one of the plays of Chikamatsu into a novel, the opposite of the modern practice with us,

though the novelizing of drama is common in Japan

The *Hachimongiya* publications created a host of imitators, all given to witty narratives of low life, but finally these witty books, or *share-bon*, became so outrageous that they had to be suppressed by authority, and then another form of fiction came into prominence, known as the *Jitsurokumono*. Pretending to be a true record of past events, it was really a sort of historical novel, dealing with the battles and vendetta of the more disturbed periods of history. The *Ohubo-Musashi-Yori*, the *Onna Taiheiki*, the *Mikawa-Go-Fudoki* and the *Oka Seidan* were all of this nature, but in time these authors began to deal so personally with people of prominence that their works were prohibited, and all mention of real persons in fiction was forbidden. The *Wasobiyoje* (1771) was a work after the manner of *Gulliver's Travels*, filled with impossible adventures, all related with little art and less humour.

The historical school of novelists was able to continue only by turning more and more to romance, and thus prolonged their career well into the nineteenth century. Santo Kyoden (1731-1816) was the first to produce a romantic

novel in the modern sense. He was followed by more distinguished names like Bakin, Tanehiko and many others. Spending his early life in a Bohemian manner, Kyoden first tried painting, settling into life with a harlot wife. She reformed and made him an excellent mate, winning his love and the respect of his friends. With a little shop for a livelihood, he wrote novels of the gay quarters he knew so well, and his work was well received. As a purveyor of pornography he came into conflict with the authorities and was imprisoned for a time. Ceasing thereafter to write objectionable books, his work lost nothing of its skill and strength of appeal, until he soon became a best-seller. Kyoden was the first Japanese novelist to bargain with his publishers, being able to command his own price for fiction. His best known novels are the *Inadzuma Hyoshi*, the *Honcho Suribodai*, the *Udongé Monogatari* and the *Shyushin Surikoden*, the latter based on the story of the famous Forty-seven *ronin*, and still widely read. Filled with wonder, horror and excitement of all kinds, the work of Kyoden may be put down as merely sensational, but his free, direct and simple style, and his graphic imaginative quality,



have left a permanent effect on the nation's fiction

The Japanese consider their greatest writer of fiction to be Kyokutei Bakin (1767-1848). He started in life as a fortune-teller, but later came into contact with Kyoden, who set him writing, and admired his work so much that he turned his hand to fiction. Acting as assistant in a bookshop for a livelihood, Bakin kept to his pen in leisure moments. He finally married the daughter of a shoe dealer and found a home. Thenceforth for sixty years he ceased not to pour forth a regular quantity of fiction, leaving at his death no less than 260 volumes. His lack of amiability lost him many friends, he quarrelled with the famous artist Hokusai who illustrated his novels. The *Yumibari-tsuki* (Bow-bend or New Moon) is thought to be his greatest novel, but among so many it is difficult to get through enough to decide on the best. Bakin's *Seiyuki* is an adaptation of the well-known Chinese romance, and his *Nanka-no-Yumé* is a tale of fairyland. His longest work is the *Hakkenden*, a novel of 3,000 pages, dealing with eight characters of the Caliban type. Bakin had a flowing, graceful and perspicuous style, and a com-

mand of language that was singular in his time, and his work is remarkably free from the immoral features characteristic of so much contemporary fiction. With such prodigious fertility it is remarkable that Bakin left so permanent an impression on national literature. He frequently indulges in the impossible, his delineation of character is weak, he is content with rapidly sketching a scene or a situation with little regard for wit or humour, and his portrayal of human love is as artificial as his men and women. But none of these defects is sufficient to detract from his supremacy in the Japanese world of fiction.

Ryutei Tanehiko (1783-1842), a contemporary of Bakin, began to write poetry, but soon turned his pen to romance. His dramatic tales, the *Shohonjūdaté*, were meant for reading, not for the stage. The *Inaka Genji*, in many volumes, is a rustic imitation of the famous work by Murasaki Shikibu, but its immoral tendency met with official objection. Most of Tanehiko's work is rather lacking in distinction, unreal in sentiment and disposed to artifice. But it affords interesting glimpses of a society now passed away. Shikitei Samba (1775-1822) was a bookseller's apprentice who

became a prolific writer of tales that had to face the usual disapproval of the authorities, they dealt with the social aspects of life in the bathhouses of Yedo, which then were places of society gossip, and even of assignation. His *Ukiyo-furo* is more amusing than edifying, yet it has found numerous imitators. The most distinguished humorist in Japanese fiction appeared at this time in the person of Jippensha Ikku, the Mark Twain of Japan. He was as eccentric in life as in literature, and boasted that this would continue after his decease, which his friends took for one more of his jokes. When dying he left strict instructions that he was to be cremated without removing the clothes in which he died. His wishes were duly respected, and he then had his last jest, for no sooner did the fire reach the body than a series of fireworks ascended, to the alarm and amusement of his friends. Ikku's fame rests mainly on the celebrated *Hizakurige* (Shank's Mare) which resembles Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, or Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*. It describes the travels on foot of two eccentric characters, Yajirobei and Kitahachi, with their manifold adventures and mishaps. While the characters are hardly creations as original as

Falstaff, Sam Weller or Sancho Panza, the book is nevertheless one streak of fun from beginning to end, unrelieved by any degree of serious element, and consequently less enchanting than if it had more contrasts. But the farcical humour is good of its kind, and the book undoubtedly represents an aspect of the real life of the time, dealing with a great variety of people, like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Another kind of fiction prevalent at this time was the *ninjobon*, a sentimental novel which dealt too intimately with sex relations and failed to escape the official censor. One of its best known authors was Tamenaga Shunsui, a bookseller of Yedo, who died in prison. His novels of low life had a vogue for a time, like those of the *Hachimonyiya*. If he had any effect on literature it was to direct the attention of novelists to human nature as the proper theme for fiction, for the novel had been too long concerned merely with the sentimental and the impossible.

In drama and poetry the progress was less obvious than in the fiction of the feudal period. It has already been shown that the medieval *No* drama must sooner or later develop into a more secular form and motive

along the lines of Occidental drama, for while the gods wanted serious work, man desired play. Dramatic stories modelled on the motive of the *Taiheiki* began to be recited or chanted by men who made this a profession, successors of the old minstrels or *kataribe*. Music was soon added, and motives of love or revenge predominated. This type of entertainment came to be known as *joruri*; and its chanters, the *joruri-katari*, were in great demand. Tales like this can still be heard chanted in Japan to the music of the *bira*, the most primitive of musical instruments. Thus the *kagura* temple dance developed into the *No* and the *No* into the *joruri* and this again into the *kabuki* or purely secular drama.

The first *kabuki shibar*, or secular theatre, was established at Osaka by a nun who escaped from a temple in Izumo and continued to practise her dancing art for a livelihood, on a stage set up at Shijo by the river Kumi and her troupe soon removed to Yedo where a *kabuki* theatre was opened at about the time when Shakespeare was at the zenith of his fame in London. Society revolted at the presence of women on the stage, and then the female parts were taken by men, as in England. A rival of the *kabuki* was the

*ayatsuri*, or marionette stage, then everywhere popular. The influence of these puppet shows on drama was to make all Japanese acting rather stilted and unnatural, as if the actors moved on wires. The secular drama of Japan did not attain to any degree of distinction until it came under the genius of the greatest of the national dramatists, Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724), who is sometimes referred to as the Shakespeare of Japan. Like his more distinguished English contemporary, he had to run away from home in youth, having offended his feudal lord by an unusual independence of spirit, he settled in Kyoto and began to write dramatic pieces in 1685. Later he became associated with the Take-moto-za, a marionette theatre at Osaka, after which a rapid succession of plays proceeded from his pen. Of a fertile and ingenious brain, Chikamatsu greatly improved on the old *joruri* drama in which dialogue was subsidiary to music and action, the poetic element being uppermost, he supplied a more definite thread of story to connect the scenes acted by the stage puppets, the new plays abounded in dramatic situations leading, with spectacular effect, to an evolution of plot well sustained to the final catastrophe.

Under Chikamatsu drama divided into two kinds, and it has so continued - the *jidaïmono*, or historical play, and the *sewamono*, or play of social life and manners. Some of his plays were in three acts and some in five. Of the fifty-one dramas that he wrote, the average is about the length of one of Shakespeare's. Of lesser artistic genius than Shakespeare, Chikamatsu has yet the same tendency to let comedy tread on the heels of tragedy, and he mixes prose with poetry, adapting the language to the status of the character represented. Neither dramatist was classical in the sense of adhering to dramatic tradition. While evincing something of Shakespeare's command of his native language, Chikamatsu is more rudimentary in portraiture of character, and his philosophy of life is rather shallow in comparison. If there is in both sometimes a lack of delicacy in taste, they err in this way much less than the society they describe. In poetry there is no ground for comparison with Shakespeare, yet the poetry of Chikamatsu occupies an important place in the history of Japanese literature. He extended the range of poetry from the tiny garden to embrace the widest landscape. The most famous play by Chikamatsu is the

*Kokusenya Kassen* (Battles of Kokusenya), the hero being a famous pirate who was the son of a Chinese father by a Japanese mother, and figured prominently in the Ming Wars, finally he became ruler of Formosa, driving out the Dutch

The triumphs of Chikamatsu were in Osaka, but after his time *kabuki* drama came into prominence in Yedo, where it made rapid progress, most of the playwrights collaborating to supply the stage. The leading Yedo dramatist of the eighteenth century was Takeda Izumo, one of his best plays was founded on the story of the famous patriot, Sugawara Michizané. But his *Chiushingura* is the best known of his dramas, being the story of the Forty-seven *ronin* who sacrificed their lives in revenging the death of their lord, a fertile source of drama in Japan. Like Chikamatsu, Takeda indulges in a mixture of comedy and tragedy, with enough enormity to please the groundlings then flocking to the theatre, but the poetic element is much less than in his master. Drama was now moving steadily away from poetry into mere dialogue, especially under Hanni, and it finally fell into disrepute altogether. The upper classes of this period would not be seen at the



*kabuki* theatre, confining themselves to the *No* which they saw performed in private, and in which they often participated themselves

The only change observable in poetry was the appearance of the *hakkar*, a species of verse even more brief than the *tanka*. For centuries attempts had been made to break away from the narrow limits of traditional verse, either in the way of *naga-uta*, or long poems, with alternating lines of seven and five syllables each, or else to compose even briefer verse than that of thirty-one syllables in five lines. The result of this latter process was the *hakkar*, a stanza of three lines, alternating in 5, 7, 5 syllables, the first three lines of the *tanka*

*Furu ike ya!*

*Kawadzu tobi-komu,*  
*midzu no oto!*

There is the old pond!

Lo, into it jumps a frog  
hark, water's music!

The *hakkar* admits a greater variety of theme than the *tanka*, in spite of its more meagre limits, for it may indulge in colloquial expressions and even comic inferences, which would be quite undignified in any measure so classical as the *waka*, or *tanka*. The most famous composer of *hakkar* verse was Basho Matsura (1648-1694), who greatly developed and re-

fined this mode of poetry. As an instrument for the evocation of serious aphorisms it became, in his hands, a serious rival to the *tanka* mode. Either sort of verse is regarded as the jewel of literature, but the *hakkar* is a polished diamond of few facets. Basho was an artist who amused himself with this form of composition during his prolonged country rambles. There may be some who regard the *hakkar* as too restricted in compass to pass for literature, but a cameo may be quite as much a revelation of art as a full-sized statue, nor does the beauty of a blossom depend on its size. For the purposes of epigram the *hakkar* is unequalled as a mode of expression. At the period in question, those who did not fancy the *hakkar* could find an equally concise and suggestive mode in the *harbun* which was in prose, the most noted composer being Yokoi Yayu (1703-1783). It was often used for gnomic affirmations and proverbs. There was a comic and vulgar variety of verse devised to admit absolute freedom of language and subject, it was known as the *kroka*, or mad poetry, and its punning propensity gave it wide vogue in the Yedo period. This mode became a much appreciated vehicle of wit (*share*), but,

if only too often it became a silly play on words, an amusement that at least implies a nimble apprehension

To come back to more serious literature, it is important to follow the work and influence of the *wagakusha*, or native scholars, in their great prose works, since it was this literature that really created the new Japan

Under the auspices of Mitsukuni, lord of Mito, and a relative of the Tokugawa family, there was a powerful reaction in favour of national learning, especially the Japanese classics. Mitsukuni gathered around him a number of scholars who compiled the *Nihonshi*, a history of Japan in classical Chinese, but he soon directed attention to the Japanese classics, producing an anthology of masterpieces in the *wabun*, or pure Japanese style. He also had the *Nihon Gwaishi* written by Rai Sanyo, being a history of the shogunate, and, as this work showed the shogunate to be an anomaly in national history, it hastened its abolition.

Keicho (1640-1701), a Buddhist monk, was one of the pioneers in promoting an intensive study of the old national literature of Japan. His *Daishoki*, a commentary on the *Manyoshu* poetry, and his *Kokon Yozaisho*, with other

commentaries on Japanese literature, made him one of the most distinguished scholars of his time. Kitamura Kigin, a scholar of the Shogun's office, edited and annotated the classical works of the Heian era. These scholars were poets as well. Keicho was succeeded by Kada Atsumamaro (1669-1736), who protested against the attitude of the *langakusha* in preferring Chinese to Japanese in literary composition. His work was carried on by his nephew Kada Arimaro (1706-1751), who lectured and wrote in Yedo, and his influence produced one of the greatest literary men of the century, Mabuchi (1697-1769), who established a college in Yedo for the study of national literature. He developed sound principles of literary criticism through which not only the best works of antiquity were made easy to understand, but which influenced the literary composition of that and all succeeding periods. A purist in language, Mabuchi aimed to exclude from his composition as many Chinese derivatives as possible.

Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), a pupil of Mabuchi, was scarcely less distinguished than his master. A prolific writer, he left fifty distinct works in 180 volumes. In his monumental achievement, the *Kojikiden*, with vast

erudition he elucidated the annals and the spirit of the nation in such a manner as to excite the profoundest interest, it was a vigorous blow at the dominance of Japanese civilization by Chinese tradition and convention. Motoori exalts the old Japanese customs, religion and language, girding at Chinese ethics and philosophy. He ridiculed Chinese rationalism, affirming that reason demanded belief in personal deity, as against the impersonal Chinese rule of Heaven. Nature revealed law, and there could be no law without mind. He strongly opposed the custom which considered suicide heroic, it was a useless waste of good lives. It is safe to say that the writings of Motoori emancipated the Japanese mind from further moral and intellectual servitude to China, for his ideas were later translated into social and political action. He was, moreover, a poet of no mean distinction, the following *tanka* of his is considered immortal.

*Shikishima no  
yamato-gokoro wo  
hito to waba  
asahi ni mou  
yamazakura kana'*

If the god-like soul,  
the divine Nippon spirit,  
you seek to know well,  
gaze at that matchless  
beauty,  
the blooming mountain  
cherry!

Motoori's idea that gréat literature, like great civilization, depends on faith in personal deity has some substance in history. In this respect he is, perhaps, too frankly anthropomorphic. But in literature Motoori created a new style, flexible, expressive and picturesque, as well as flowing and lucid, and we cannot wonder that his influence on society and literature is perceptible even down to the present time.

Hirata Atsutane (1746-1843) was an eminent theologian who arose to fame as an interpreter of Motoori's works, and of Japanese antiquities in general. But his writing so disturbed the official mind that he was at last banished from the shogun's capital, he dwelt too frankly on the anomalousness of the shogunate as a usurpation of imperial prerogative. This attitude toward the native scholars finally drove many of them from Yedo to Kyoto, where their influence all the more hastened the downfall of the *bakufu*, or shogunate. Like previous *wagakusha*, Hirata carried on the agitation against things Chinese. His *Kishin Shoron* combats Chinese notions of impersonal deity. The existence of evil led to his belief in a dualism implying conflicting deities. Hirata's *Koshiden* is a monument of

ancient learning, but apart from its vigorous and concise composition it has no special merit as literature, lacking, as it does, the distinction and charm of Motoori's work

During the eighteenth century the revolt against the rigour of the Tsung philosophy was continued, and the teaching of another Chinese philosopher, Wang-Yang-Ming, was opposed to the theories of Chu-hi. It was an attempt to substitute idealistic intuitionism for the scientific teaching of Chu-hi. Among these sophists was Ito Junsai (1627-1705), who was then the leader of the *wagakusha* movement, he set aside the commentators of Confucius and Mencius and went directly to the original classics of the sages. This led him to the conclusion that the teaching of Wang was more consistent with the sages than the teaching of Chu-hi. Chu-hi maintained that the moral law was induced from a study of nature, while Wang held it to be an evolution from man's intuition. Wang opposed the dualism of Chu-hi, contending that the positive and negative principles were really one, the human mind and the principle of the universe were a unity. Man was greater than nature, and wisdom lay in looking within and understanding himself.

Thus while Chu-hi based moral knowledge and wisdom on experience, Wang based such knowledge and wisdom on intuition. The Japanese followers of Chu-hi were men of great erudition, but rather bigoted and unprogressive traditionalists, while the disciples of the Wang philosophy were men of a very fine type of character, concerned mainly with practical morality and religion. They laid great stress on integrity of heart and development of true manhood, and so did more for a realization of personality than the other school which was more given to intellectual inquiry and speculation. Tohai (1670-1736), the son of Ito Junsai, and another noted scholar, Ogyu Sorai (1668-1728), continued the campaign of contention between the two schools of philosophy, and this eventually became so bitter that philosophical disputation in public had to be prohibited. The persistent use of Chinese for all serious composition naturally offended the native scholars who wrote in Japanese. In the next period the triumph of native over foreign ideas was complete, and literature turned to modern problems in a language capable of great prose.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of homilies there was an abundance,



but chiefly of the *Shingaku* trend, drawing information and illustration from all sources, with Erastian toleration. The language was homely but powerful, admirably suited to arouse ignorant minds, if it did not do much to save souls, nor did these Buddhist preachers disdain Rabelaisian humour. One such discourse, the *Kyuo Dowa*, has been translated in Mitford's *Tales of Old Japan*. But most of the religious literature of Japan is of little or no significance from an æsthetic or literary point of view.

The truth is that Japanese literature during this period suffered from the cramping effect of a feudal civilization, much as Roman literature did in the period of the Empire's decadence. Where art lacks natural freedom it is driven to find vent for its ideas in forms of grotesquerie, in an eccentric attitude to life, it grimaces and plays antics instead of concerning itself with beauty, truth and goodness. All greatness was associated with the Yedo Court, and the people were nothing. Literature was deprived of the freedom to be a criticism of life, and so was not really literature. The prevalence of historical novels showed the preference of biography to social life that we see in Tacitus. Fiction was too

much of a satire on society to allow the sympathy essential to art. The popularity of the *hakka* poetry showed a love of condensed brevity in art. Epigrams are the literary food of an age so satisfied with itself that it seeks to make up for the triteness of its ideas by packing them in small bundles, weighty yet portable, in themselves complete, merchandise in cartons, cheap goods. Thus Basho, like Martial, satirized the valetudinarianism of a society that took its poetry in homœopathic doses. A society of limited sympathies and unlimited selfishness is incapable of song, too indolent for either good poetry or good prose, and may tolerate literary imitations in lapidary language and form, polished but hard, like society itself.

### EXAMPLES OF HAKKAI VERSE

Yo ni furu wa	The world we pass through,
sara ni shigare no	like a shelter from a
yodori kana !	shower,
	Is , and then adieu !
	SOGI (1471)

Moshi nakaba	If it did but sing,
chocho kaga no	the butterfly would suffer
ku wo uken !	in a cage, poor thing !
	MORITAKE (1500)

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Michi-nobé no	The brilliant floweret
mukugé wa uma ni	by the roadside, led the
kuware-keri !	horse
	thus to devour it !
	BASHO (1689)

## Authorless verse

Mizu-abura	No lamp have I
nakute neru yo ya	by my couch here where
mado no tsuki !	I lie,
	but my window moon !

Shiri-bito ni	Oh friends keep away,
awaji, awaji to	that alone I may worship
hanami kana !	the blossoms all day !

Sumidare ya	Peeping through the pines,
aru yo hisoka ni	between the midnight
matsu no tsuki !	showers,
	softly the moon whines !

Tsuyu no yo no	Though the world but be
tsuyu no yo nagara	a dewdrop, yet it still is
sarinagara !	all our world, you see !

Natsu kusa ya	Like summer grasses
tsuwa-mono-domono	fades the fallen soldier's
yume no ato !	dream,
	so all fame passes !

Suzushisa yo  
yudachi nagara  
iru hi-kage !

O welcome coolness,  
and through the rain a  
radiant  
sunset soft stealing !

Kore wa kore  
to bakari hana mo  
yoshino-yama !

Wherever you go  
and see nothing but blos-  
soms,  
that's Mount Yoshino !

Ware no kite  
asobe ya oya no  
nai suzume !

Come and play with me,  
you poor little sparrow,  
left without a mother !

Aka-aka to  
shimo kori-keri  
soba no kuki !

Red as crimson gems  
is the rime now turned  
to ice  
on the buckwheat stems !

Kuchi akeba  
go-zo no miyuru  
kawazu kana !

Opening his mouth,  
he displays his whole  
inside,  
because he's a frog !

## EXAMPLES OF FEUDAL PROSE

" Education begins as soon as the child com-  
mences to show pleasure or anger      Some  
nurses make cowards of children by telling them  
frightful stories      Cunning, lying, chattering women  
should be kept away from children      A Tutor

should be a man of upright life                      Better miss  
a year's study than consort one day with a dis-  
reputable person                      ”

KAIBARA (1630-1716)    The *Dojinhun*

“ If we make inward pleasures our chief aim, and use the ears and eyes simply as means of procuring such delights from without, we shall not be molested by the lusts of these senses. If we open our hearts to the beauty of heaven and earth, and the ten thousand created things, they will yield us pleasure without limit, pleasure always before our eyes, night and morning, full and overflowing. The man who takes delight in such things becomes owner of mountains and streams, of the moon and the flowers, and needs not to pay court to others in order to enjoy them. They are not bought with treasure. Without expenditure of a single coin he may use them to his heart's content, and yet never exhaust them.

Vulgar pleasures, even before they pass, become a torment to the body. If, for example, carried away by desire, we eat and drink our fill of dainty things, it is pleasant at first, but disease and suffering eventually follow. In general, vulgar pleasures corrupt the heart, injure the constitution, and end in misery. The pleasures of the man of worth, on the other hand, nourish the heart, and do not lead astray. To speak in terms of outward things the pleasures we derive from love of the moon and the flowers, from gazing on hills and streams, from the humming of the wind, or follow with envy a flight of birds, are of a mild nature. We may

take delight in them all day long and do ourselves no harm No man will blame us, nor will the gods remonstrate with us for such indulgence It is easy to be attained, even by the poor and needy, and has no ill consequences ”

The *Rakukun*

“ Now to learn the Way nothing more is necessary than to study its principles and practise them effectively until you have the restful feeling of a fish in water, and take the simple pleasure in them that a bird does in the trees The Way should be made one’s very life at all times, never departing from it for a moment Living for a day, let us fulfil the Way for that day, and die , living for a month, let us fulfil the Way for that month, and die , living for a year, let us fulfil the Way for that year, and die , and thus life will have no regrets ”

MURO KYUSO (1658-1729) *Shundar Zatsuwā*

“ There is nothing of so keen an intelligence as deity Man hears with his ears, but nothing beyond their reach , and he sees with his eyes, but nothing beyond their range God knows not the help of eyes or ears, nor wastes time in reflection With deity sensation is immediate, and is followed by immediate responsive action . Although there is in the universe something infinitely quick of hearing and sharp of seeing, it has no form or voice , and, though ever present, it is never cognizable to our senses, but is sensible to the Real and the True As it feels, so it responds

If there is no truth or reality there can be no response The response is a proof of its existence"

*Ibid*

"The foreign word *deus*, which this western man [Father Sidotti] used in his discourse, is equivalent to creator, and means simply a being who first made the heaven and the earth and all therein. He argued that the universe could not come into existence of itself. It must have had a maker. But I consider that if this were logical, then who made *deus*? How could he be born when there was yet no heaven and no earth? If *deus* could come into existence of himself, why could not heaven and earth do likewise? Moreover, this man had a doctrine of heaven and hell. But I could not understand how there could be good or evil before creation."

ARAI HAKUSEKI (1657-1725) *Seiyō Kibun*

'My father, when he had arranged his hair and adjusted his clothing, never neglected to make obeisance to Buddha. On the anniversary of his father's and mother's death he and my mother prepared the rice for the offerings. This duty was never entrusted to servants. After dressing, he waited quietly until dawn, and then went out to his official duty. Ever since I can remember, there were but few black hairs in his head. He had a square-shaped face with high forehead. His eyes were large, he had a thick growth of beard, and was short of stature. He was, however, a big boned, powerful man. He was never known

to betray anger, nor do I remember that even when he laughed he ever gave way to boisterous mirth. Much less did he ever descend to violent language when he had occasion to reprimand anyone. In conversation he used as few words as possible. His demeanour was grave. I never saw him startled, flurried or impatient. The room he usually occupied he kept cleanly swept and tidy, it had one old picture hung on the wall, and usually a few flowers of the season set in a vase. He painted a little in black and white, not being fond of colours. When in good health he never troubled a servant, but did everything for himself."

*The Ori-taku-shiba*

"The value of a rule of conduct lies in its conducing to good order in the State. But Chinese history shows a succession of different dynasties ruling over that country, while Japan has been true to one unbroken line of rulers. The dynasties of China were each founded in rebellion and parricide. A powerful ruler was able now and then to transmit his authority to a son or grandson, but they in turn were deposed or killed, and civil war was perpetual. Such untoward results could only be due to a false system of philosophy.

In the eighth century the costume and etiquette of China were adopted by our imperial Court. This foreign pomp and splendour only covered the rapid depravation of men's hearts, and created a wide gulf between emperor and people. So long as the ruler maintained a simple style of living, his subjects were contented with the hardness of their lot,



for their wants were few, and they were easily ruled. But when the sovereign began to have a magnificent palace, gorgeous robes, and crowds of richly dressed women to wait upon him, the sight of these things caused in others a desire to possess similar luxuries, and when they could not obtain them by force their envy was excited. Had the emperor continued to reside in a house roofed with shingles, with walls of mud and to carry his sword in a sheath bound with the tendrils of a creeping plant, and to go to the field carrying his own bow and quiver, as in days of old, the present degeneration would not have ensued. With the introduction of Chinese customs the sovereign, while occupying so high a place, has nevertheless been degraded to the intellectual level of a woman. The real power has passed into the hands of servants who, though they have never actually claimed the title, yet are sovereigns in fact, and the emperor left an utter nullity."

MABUCHI (1697-1769)

That the Sun Goddess appeared in Japan proves the superiority of that country to all others that enjoy her favours. Having endowed her grandson with the three sacred treasures, she proclaimed him sovereign of Japan for all time, and his line shall continue to rule our nation as long as the heavens and the earth endure. To the end of time each emperor is the son of the Goddess of the Sun, his mind in perfect harmony with hers. He does not seek new inventions, but rules in accordance with precedents dating from the god age, and if

ever in doubt he can have recourse to divination which reveals to him the mind of the great Goddess

Foreign countries, like India and China, beyond the domain of the Goddess, have no permanent rulers, so that evil spirits find freedom there, corrupt mankind, and men are able to seize power and become sovereign. In China such are called 'holy men,' which is a grave error for their ethics may be reduced to two principles: take other people's territory, and keep what is taken.<sup>1</sup>

When things go right of themselves it is best to leave them alone. In ancient times there was no system in Japan, and the nation was peacefully ruled. Being truly moral in their practice, the Japanese required no theory of morals, and the fuss made by the Chinese about theoretical morals is due to their laxity in practice. Every

event in the universe is the act of the gods. Some of the gods are good and some bad, and their acts partake of their nature. Buddhists attribute events to retribution, and the Chinese to Heaven. But if Heaven could issue decrees

the good would prosper and the bad suffer misfortune. No, whenever anything goes wrong it is due to evil gods.

This country was created by the good deities, Izanagi and Izanami.

Human beings produced by the spirit of the two creative deities are endowed with ethical knowledge, and it is unnecessary for them to trouble about systems of morality. Were a system of morals essential to man, he would be inferior to the animals, all of whom instinctively know what to

do and what not to do, only in an inferior degree to man "

MOTOŌRI (1731-1801) The *Kojikiden*

" Although numbers of Japanese cannot state with any certainty from what gods they have descended, all of them have tribal names (*kabané*) originally bestowed by the emperor, and those given to the study of genealogies can tell from a man's ordinary surname who his remotest ancestor must have been It is from the divine descent of the Japanese people that their immeasurable superiority in courage and intelligence to the natives of other countries is due The Buddhist, Indian and Chinese accounts of the origin of things are mere nonsense The principles which animate the universe are beyond the power of human analysis, so that all attempts pretending to explain them are to be rejected All that man can think and know is limited by the powers of sight, feeling and calculation, and what goes beyond these cannot be ascertained by any amount of thinking In modern times men in Western countries have voyaged all around the seas, as inclination prompted them, and they have discovered that the earth is round and that the sun and moon revolve around it in a vertical direction, from which we may see how full of errors are the Chinese accounts, and how impossible it is to believe anything professing to be determined *a priori* Comparing our own theories with the most recent discoveries we find there is not the slightest error, and yet there are many things that Western know-

ledge cannot explain                      Undiscovered crimes  
 go unpunished by society, but they draw on man the  
 hatred of the invisible gods who visit the guilty with  
 disease and misfortune    Heed not the praise of men,  
 but live so as to be unashamed of the Unseen  
 Make a vow to the Unseen and you will not wander  
 from the Way    The spirits of the dead continue  
 to exist in the unseen world which is everywhere  
 about us, and they all become gods of varying  
 characters and degrees of influence    Some reside  
 in temples built in their honour, others hover  
 near their tombs, and they continue to render  
 service to their princes, parents, wives and children,  
 as when they were in the body                      ”

HIRATA ATSUTANE (1776-1843)

*The Kishin Shinron*

“ Once in the busy street they began to comment  
 on the manners of the people, the gentleness of  
 the men and women, the precise manner of their  
 dress, from postman to laundryman    Suddenly  
 they noticed a crowd in great agitation, and  
 every one, young and old, was rushing in that  
 direction, shouting like mad, ‘ Ho-u-ho, yoi-yoi !  
 Ekkorasassa ! ’

‘ What’s up now ? ’ asked Yaji    ‘ There seems  
 to be something serious over there    What a fearful  
 crowd ! I say ! ’ he called to a passer-by    ‘ Can  
 you tell us what’s going on over there ? ’

‘ It looks like a fight,’ said the man

‘ A fight in the capital ? ’ exclaimed Kita    ‘ That  
 ought to be something worth seeing ! ’ So they  
 hurried towards the crowd which now quite blocked

up the street Elbowing their way into the mass of people, they soon saw the two men in altercation From the tray in his hand one of them appeared to be a fishmonger, he put the tray down beside him His opponent seemed to be a robust young labourer In the capital people do not readily show anger, even in a quarrel, the men did not attempt to strike each other, but stood calmly there in the sunshine, eyeing each other menacingly

'Excuse me,' said the fishmonger 'It wasn't me that collided with you I hope you don't wish me to knock you on the head'

'You talk big,' replied the labourer 'But if you dare to lift a finger at me, you'll get it back!'

As he spoke he folded his towel neatly and bound it about his head

'I fear you wag your jaw too much,' retorted the fishmonger 'Where do you come from at all?'

'I,' said the labourer, 'am a man of Ame-no-koji in Horikawa'

'What's your name?'

'My name is Kihei'

'How old are you?' persisted the fishmonger

'Twenty-four'

'You amaze me,' said the fishmonger 'Who would have supposed you were so young? Are you telling the truth?'

'I'd like to know what you're talking about,' said the labourer 'It's the honest truth My wife, unfortunately, died this year'

'Ah, what a misfortune,' remarked the fishmonger 'You must have been sorely grieved!'

'That's not all,' continued the labourer 'I am left with a tiny baby to care for, a dreadful trouble'

'I can imagine so I am two years older than you'

'Then I am the younger of us two,' said the labourer 'Where's your house?'

'You take the first street east in Inokuma-dori, and there you are'

'Really? A blind doctor named Sumpaku lives there, does he not?'

'Well,' said the fishmonger, 'and what about him?'

'Oh, nothing, only he's a distant relative of mine On your way home you might remember me to him'

'Pardon me,' said the fishmonger, 'but I see no reason why I should undertake to carry your messages I am not as big a fool as I look'

At this point in the quarrel the spectators began to yawn

'Come on!' said one to another 'Let's go, there's nothing in this'

'Oh, wait a bit! They're just going to begin the fight'

'But I left a guest at home,' expostulated the other

'Then go and bring him here You might bring a mat to sit on while you're at it We can squat under the shade of the eave while the fight proceeds, and pull our whiskers while looking at it'

'I bet on the fellow on the off side,' whispered one

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'No,' said another 'The one on this side is the  
likeher See how he talks!'

'Yes, but only talk By the way, that  
reminds me, how's your missus? Is she better?'

'Thanks, yes Well, she's ah ,,"

JIPPENSHU IKKU (1831) Hizakurige

## V

### MODERN PROSE

(1868-1928)

THE fall of the Shogunate, brought about largely through the influence of literature on public opinion, was hastened further by the arrival of foreigners who forced Japan to reopen intercourse with western nations in 1859. The Shogun resigned in 1867, the Emperor was restored to imperial power and entered his new capital at Yedo, changed to Tokyo, in 1868. Thereafter there was a complete reconstruction of the nation's government and institutions, involving a general revival and improvement of literature.

From this time there developed an intense passion for Occidental learning, to achieve which the principal languages of Europe were studied, and the influence of European literature was widely felt. The public mind was intent on acquiring the customs, laws and institutions of the Occident. The Emperor



promised an imperial constitution defining the rights of his subjects, and an imperial parliament involving representative government. Educational reform was in the air. Imperial embassies were despatched to the United States and England to study Western civilization and to return with sufficient knowledge to facilitate its introduction to Japan. Fuku-zawa, the sage of Mito, established a college for the acquisition of Western learning, his *Seryo Jyō* (Condition of Western Countries) had a wide effect on the national mind. Translations from the works of the leading European writers soon began to appear in Japanese. Among these were Smiles' *Self-Help*, Mill's *Liberty*, books by Bentham, Tyndal, Spencer, Huxley, Bacon, Scott, Dickens, Gibbon, Macaulay, Carlyle and others were used as school textbooks. The English language became the chief medium of Western knowledge, and did much to adjust a balance between thought and reason, as well as to exercise a wholesome effect on the form and content of literature.

Of course the process of modernization was too rapid not to lead to reaction, and three distinct movements, marked by as many periods, were seen to be at work on the

national mind, and strongly reflected in the new literature. First there was the powerful occidentalizing tendency already mentioned, and which continued during the fifteen years following 1870. This was followed by ten years of serious reaction, when an aggressive tide of ultra-nationalism set in, owing to the too radical changes in society. Japan was shocked at some of the ideas and manners emanating from the West, and still more at some of the things heard about Occidental civilization. Henceforth such civilization was to be imitated only in a material sense, but in morals, religion and culture Japan felt that the West had nothing to teach her. The third period began with the fear that reaction might mean a national reversion to feudal ways, hastened by an intensive study of the individualism of Nietzsche, led by Dr Takayama.

In the midst of this mental and moral confusion the English language, and our institutions, had a steadying effect that redounded to the benefit of both literature and civilization. This was of immense importance while literature was the main force in promoting the development of modern ideas and practices. For Japanese literature itself had to

undergo changes almost as radical as those in society. In the making of the new Japan books exercised a greater influence than any other one factor. Japanese leading writers were the pioneers of reform, they were the leaders in the cause of civil and individual liberty and the promoters of constitutional government.

It is interesting also to note how the peculiar history of the Japanese language had made it a splendid medium for the expression of Occidental ideas and the encouragement of Western civilization. Used for over a thousand years almost exclusively as an instrument for expressing the thought of China, in religion, society and politics, the Japanese language now turned quite naturally to conveying the thought of Europe, even though therewith it had but little natural affinity. It was nothing short of amazing how well this task was accomplished. But the ideographs have wonderful powers of adaptation, and can lend themselves to any combination necessary to impart all sorts of ideas, native or foreign. It is unlikely that Western thought could have made such rapid progress in Japan had it not been for this long period of training in the expression of native thought through a

foreign medium offering facility for every turn of phrase and definition

The influence of English studies, and of translations from English standard authors into Japanese, continued until the Germanizing of national and military education some years later. Since the days of Dutch influence that language had been used in acquiring a knowledge of Western medicine, and now German became the chief language of medical science in Japan, and the army came under the instruction of German officers. German philosophers and scientists were now the authors of numerous books translated into Japanese. Then arose a taste for things Russian, and the works of Tolstoy and other Russians were read in translations, until Slav fiction came to exercise a greater influence than any other on the Japanese novel. In its tendency to pessimistic fatalism the Russian is nearer to the Japanese mind than any other. But for general purposes the English language and English literature dominated all others. Dr Mozumé issued a history of Japanese civilization modelled on Green's *History of the English People*. Hundreds of dictionaries, grammars, phrase-books and reference manuals indicated the attention

devoted to foreign languages, and a college was established in Tokyo to give adequate instruction in all the chief languages of the civilized world. Some attempts were made to replace the complicated ideographs by the roman alphabet, but the Japanese mind proved unable to carry on any intricate train of thought apart from the traditional idea-expressing medium. As the spoken language of Japan had never wielded the power of the written language, books continued to be the nation's best teachers.

There is in evidence, however, a slow but steady process of bringing the written language more nearly into conformity with the spoken. This is seen chiefly in the press and in periodical literature, which has the habit of inserting colloquial phrases in learned articles. Orators also indulge in this habit in making popular appeals. But oratory is a new art in Japan, the first public speech being delivered by a university professor seated in native fashion on the floor. Talk is plentiful enough in modern Japan, but public speeches and lectures are always taken less seriously than the printed page. To the Oriental mind there is something mysterious if not sacred about the written word. Books

and periodicals have a tremendous hold on the mind of the masses, which opens a fine field for literature, of which full advantage is being taken. The number of literary weeklies and monthlies is enormous, and great reviews like the *Taiyo* and the *Chuo Koron* have exercised a wide influence. While writers on science are numerous, works on philosophy and history are few, the national mind has a dislike of metaphysical speculation, and disrespect for truth affects history no less than literature in general. The most popular literature is concerned with mere news, commerce, finance, and with fiction for the multitude, most of which cannot be ranked as art.

But Japan possesses very few veteran writers of fiction such as are seen in England, the United States and Europe. Public taste is so fickle that the lion of to-day is forgotten to-morrow, and the career of even the greatest is comparatively short-lived. Thus the average novelist has no incentive to anything worth while. He usually tries only to meet the taste of the moment, with what success he can. The lack of interest in fiction among the intellectual classes is due to the same reason that reflected for so long on the

theatre as being no place for respectable persons to seek amusement, and there is no doubt that the early theatres and writers of fiction were rather disreputable, as we have seen. The change that has come over public opinion in regard to the theatre is gradually becoming equally true of fiction. But the readers of fiction still represent the romantic youths and maidens and idle housewives, that the intellectual class does not emulate, and the novel has yet to win the place that it holds in the Occident. The present revolution going on in Japanese fiction is not only changing the quality of the literature, but fast improving the position and status of literary men. The days when the novelist was regarded as a Bohemian are fading in the distance, and many of the leading novelists of modern Japan are not only distinguished university graduates but prominent members of society. The important fact is that so many are able to support themselves by their pens.

The modern world of fiction in Japan resolves itself into three distinct schools, all revealing the effect of corresponding influences in Occidental literature—the Realists, the Classicists and the Naturalistic school. For

creation of these tendencies of thought there had been long preparation. The transition from feudal to modern literature, which marked the closing years of the nineteenth century, was a reflection of the social and political confusion resulting from sudden contact with the mind of Europe. During the twenty years following 1868 society and government underwent radical reconstruction, and a period of reconstruction is not one of culture, so that literature, no less than art in general, suffered accordingly. The last of the decadent Yedo fiction was seen in the works of Kanagaki Robun, whose *Tramp Abroad* (1870) was widely read. But with so many translations from Occidental fiction, and so many imitators of Occidental novelists, Japanese fiction began to undergo the same transformation that was going on in everything else. Consequently the reaction against the Bakin style of fiction was immediate and complete.

Tsubouchi Yuzo's *Shosetsu Shinzan* (Spirit of Fiction) in 1883 denounced the artificial conventionality of the traditional novel, and, through his new organ of literary criticism, the *Waseda Bungaku*, he created a new school of writers devoted to realism. The ideals of



these realists were based on the conviction that the most important element in the novel is passion, to which all circumstances and customs must be subject. The attitude was directed against the Bakin school where passion played a subordinate part to reason and conscience in a somewhat artificial manner seldom seen in real life. The motive of the old fiction was moral and didactic, that of the new was truth. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century this school produced a host of writers, good and bad, some of whom won fame, the lesser ones dying poor and unremembered. But the greater ones stuck to their pens with noble zeal and in a genuine literary spirit.

One of the best of the realist novels was given to the world by Tsubouchi himself, depicting life as it is, rather than as it ought to be. His *Shosei Katagi* (Student Life) and *Saikun* (Wife) created a popular demand. Like many another successful novelist Tsubouchi later turned his hand to drama. His *Maki-no-kata*, based on history, was decidedly melodramatic, but with some strong scenes and situations. He also translated some of Shakespeare's plays into Japanese, which influenced the vernacular stage. In

the same school of fiction we have the novels of Shimei Futabatei, whose *Ukigumo* (Fleeting Cloud) in 1907 revealed a craftsmanship superior to that of his master. Having been a newspaper correspondent in Russia, he knew the works of Turgenev and translated some of them into Japanese. He translated some of Shakespeare's plays also. Highly gifted, and with wide experience, Shimei brought new ideas, with a finer art, into this type of fiction, rendering crude realism more æsthetic. Two of his novels have been translated into English.

At a certain point in its course the Realistic school divided into two currents, one inclining to art for art's sake, and the other leaning to enough idealism to give art a higher aim. Hasegawa continued to follow the less ideal current, but his disciples, Oguri Tayo, Kosugi Tagai and Shunyo Yamagawa, did not adhere to his ideas of the novel. The Genyusha, a literary club led by Koyo Ozaki, followed the principle of art for art's sake, and developed some fine stylists in the mode of the short story, like Bizan Kawakami and Bimiyosai Yamada, who resorted to the colloquial as against the stilted and formal language of tradition. Though less humanistic than Hase-

gawa, these writers made the novel more æsthetic, and though fiction had not yet begun to recognize the separation taking place between the individual and society, they sought to bring literature into closer relation with life

The idealist wing of the realistic school is, perhaps, best represented by Koda Rohan (d 1926), whose work shows the influence of Buddhist philosophy and sentiment, but yet it stood for masculine vigour as against the effeminate tendency of Koyo Ozaki. The work of Koda Rohan laid special emphasis on the invisible elements of life, and attached more importance to insight than to observation. He used the vernacular for dialogue, and expressed his own ideas in the usual literary style. His lofty aim and brilliant imaginative qualities, bordering on the poetic, made Koda Rohan one of the greatest writers of his time.

Of the Classical school Ogai Mori was the leader, all his work was highly polished, revealing the joy that comes of forgotten toil. Forsaking surgery for fiction, Mori made a careful study of French, German and Italian writers, some of which he translated into his own tongue. His most original novel was the

story of a marriage between a German woman and a Japanese. The Classical school never created much interest, though it had some able writers. Fiction had so bad a reputation that its first need was greater freedom, and higher aims to justify such freedom. The way to freedom was prepared by Ryukei Yano's *Kerikoku* (Rise of Thebes), 1883, Techo Suehiro's *Setchubai* (Plum Tree in Snow), 1886, and Tokai-sanshi Shiba's *Kajin-no-kigu* (Chance Meeting of the Fair and Brave), which emphasized the necessity of liberty, equality and fraternity in the new civilization. These writers had been studying the works of Disraeli and Dumas. Sudo Nansui wrote political novels charged with European allusions, and showing familiarity with the greater English, French and Japanese novelists. His *New Woman* was a prophecy of what Japan was to be under Western civilization, much of which has come true. Yamada Taketaro attempted novels in the spoken language, eliminating the old literary dialect altogether, his *Natsu Kodachi* reveals the influence of European studies. Yenchō wrote novels in the colloquial, with plots taken from French sources. Translations from European fiction now flooded the Jap-

anese bookstalls, notably from the works of Hugo and Dostoevsky

In the Naturalistic school of writers may be included Kunikida Doppo, Toson, Masamuné Hakuchō and others, who produced stories in a bold and fascinating style and unconventional in treatment, which charmed the young and caused their sober elders to frown. Most of these writers, like their masters in France and Russia, were born in the provinces, gave up unfinished the dull routine of school life, and took to Bohemian ways of existence as aspirants to fame, usually connecting themselves with some journal or other. The general trend of the Naturalistic school has been towards some form of romanticism, seeking to escape from the conventionality of the past, they believe in an intellectual and spiritual awakening to inquire into the meaning of life. A new magazine, the *Bungakukai* in 1893 became the voice of these young romanticists, led then by Tokoku Kitamura and Koko Baba. With some trace of Christian influence, ardent in spirit and moral in purpose, these writers professed to be searching for the truth of life. Failing to find an antidote to pessimism, poor Kitamura committed suicide. From his friends came the

cry, "Back to life!" facing its facts to find its truth. Desiring to turn from the fancied complexities of daily existence to concrete examples of reality, these writers did all they could to hasten on the war with Russia. The numerous new literary magazines that cropped up only tended to increase the flood of mediocre composition. Describing illicit love with grace and pathos, these minor writers brought life no consolation. It is noticeable that the more minor the writer the more sensual the pen, these tales had a brief and inglorious history. Ozaki Koyo was a popular and voluminous writer who pursued the colloquial style, showing the influence of his English studies, even to the use of short sentences and pronouns. His style was taken up by the Press, and by periodical literature generally, and has now become almost universal, with a marked effect on literature. Ozaki's *Tajo takon* is a study of sentiment, in which maudlin grief surpassed anything before possible in Japan.

A feature of the new novels was the number of women that began to write, the greatest of those was Higuchi Ichiyo, who wrote mainly of the poor and the oppressed, in a style full of charm. The men took up the challenge

and began to write of domestic life too. The rather sentimental novel, *Hototogisu* (Nightingale), 1900, by Roka Tokutomi, translated into English as *Namiko*, had great vogue for a time, and the Tolstoyan note he sounded has had many imitators in the socialistic group. This sort of novel experienced further development after the war with Russia, when the revolt against conventional ethics increased and naturalism became popular. A sharp reaction was felt in the direction of the Zola brand of fiction, and the works of De Maupassant, D'Annunzio, Ibsen and Hauptmann found translation into Japanese, and imitators among novelists like Toyama Katai, whose *Futon* (Quilt) was a tale resembling Mr Wells' *William Clissold*. The world of fiction now became extremely diversified and complex, as in England. Novels of all kinds appeared, social, political, historical, psychological and novels of low society, representing every side of life. The most significant feature of this fiction was its definite break with the past, in form if not in matter, but the mode of treatment was quite new. Hitherto fiction had been concerned with the past, now it showed an intense interest in the present, as well as a

*greater breadth of range and a deeper seriousness in art*

It was only too obvious that the transition from the old to the new fiction had not been achieved without great sacrifice, for some of the realism was too gross and the naturalism too base to indicate progress. Nor was there any consolation in the fact that the new could hardly be worse than the old. Fiction had put on the frock-coat and the top-hat, so to speak, but it clothed the same old man. In the new fiction the normal and the ordinary were not so interesting as the artificial if impossible marvels of the old, the fabulous, in too many instances, had only been replaced by the merely hideous, and mystery by sensuality. The recognition of natural passion in fiction had not solved the problem of its reinstatement. The cosmic force of love was recognized, but the legitimate form of its self-expression was not found to be a spirit of service, nor a joy in harmony with the spirit of the universe.

Some of the psychological novels were distinctly more wholesome, as well as manifesting greater art in form and composition. Soseki Natsumé (d 1916), after studying in England, where he came under the influence of George



Meredith, returned home to become professor of English literature in the Tokyo Imperial University. His fiction from the beginning showed the Meredithian attitude to life. This *yoyu* style, based on calm observation in contrast to the direct action of the Naturalistic school, was deeply appreciated by all thoughtful readers. On a background of wide knowledge, acute perception and profound learning, Natsumé built up a novel charged with ironic humour and painstaking psychological analysis, tedious at times, as Meredith himself is, but powerful in its total effect. Natsumé's *I Am a Cat* pictures a domestic scene as the cat sees it. Among his many disciples the most important is Miekichirō Suzuki, whose novel *Kushi* (Comb) was well received. Mimei Ogawa was more romantic, and Shoko Kenoshita more socialistic, while Tanizaki had more of the weird imagination of Poe. The hedonism of Kafu Nagai was simply a satire on contemporary society, but his sketches of life in America and France were brilliant and interesting.

The fiction of twentieth-century Japan is too much in a state of suspension to admit of accurate appraisal, for we know not where the parachute will drop. The more hopeful

humanitarianism of the psychological school is modifying the roughness of the realists and the naturalistic writers, and civility, moderation and culture show signs of revival. The White Birch estate (*Shirabata*), called after their literary organ of that name, appear to be under the impulse of altruistic motives; yet one of their leading writers, Arishima Takeo, eloped with a married woman and then persuaded her to join him in death. Arishima's *Kain-no Matsuri* (Cain's Descendants) and his *Gaen* (Triumph) were permeated with artistic force and love of humanity, while his *Shita yomo zengo* (Death Before and After) enunciated his philosophy of love, which, in view of his end, seems unavailing.

Among the more hopeful of the writers now claiming the attention of fiction readers in Japan, Ton Satomi is winning wide recognition as a prolific and facile composer of novels with a keen psychological interest and insight. The concise and clear-cut style of his *Chofu* (Seabreeze) is marked by an originality of conception and treatment that is highly moral in tone and pleasantly exceptional. Satomi's *Wakai* and *Anjatoru* appear to be autobiographical. Sano Musakoji is a

literal Tolstoyan, though deeply imbued with his master's spirit, he yet lacks the constructive power essential to high achievement. Under the auspices of a band of undergraduates finding self-expression in a literary organ known as the *Shinshicho* (Current New Thought) there is in process a rival movement to the White Birch writers, whose aim is to promote a school of culture and classic grace in fiction, in which the names figuring most prominently are those of Kan Kikuchi, R Akutagawa and Masao Kumé. Kikuchi is also a rising dramatist and literary critic, with an increasingly wide appeal. Akutagawa has more of the Oriental touch, though he likes treating old materials in a new way, after the manner of Natsumé, his *Jikokuhen* (Hell Trouble) and *Hana* (Nose) being good examples of his art.

Since the European War, which indicated so distinctly the errors underlying modern civilization, the cry for reconstruction has led to a flood of proletarian fiction too propagandist to reveal great literary art. Of this work the novels of Toyohiko Kagawa are an example. Kagawa is a Christian philanthropist devoting his life to amelioration of slum conditions and writing novels to create

an interest in the down and out, as well as to collect money for his work. His *Sharsen-wo-Koete* (Across the Death Line) has sold in hundreds of thousands, and has been translated into English. This wide popularity of some religious novels is an interesting sign of the times. The *Shukhe-to-Sono* (Priest and Disciple) of Hyakuzo Kurata has met with welcome for the same reason, while Ebara's Christian stories also have an extensive sale. An attempt to delineate love scenes and sex relations in the guise of sacred themes is seen in the writings of novelists who entitle their volumes *Shin Yaku* (New Testament) and *Kyu Yaku* (Old Testament) and *Fukatsu* (Resurrection).

It is obvious that modern Japanese fiction remains in too indeterminate a state to justify much prediction, but doubtless sooner or later it will come to its own. It is at any rate no longer an independent and isolated growth, as in former days. Cosmopolitan in sweep, it must now move on for good or evil with the main currents of the world. But as one surveys this wealth of books issued during the last few years, it is impossible not to feel its lack of living interest to

the Occidental mind. For the most part it springs from customs, events, personages, places and traditions so utterly different from our own, and from motives of censure and praise so widely at variance from the ideas dominating Occidental civilization and society, that we are bound to feel a marked absence of appeal. To us it seems strange, even alien, this painstaking occupation with minute details that no Western mind could pause over, often indulging in the most prolix verbosity, and sometimes dealing much too freely with matters forbidden by the more delicate taste of the West. Here we shall no doubt be charged with hypocrisy. But Japanese novels cannot be accused of narrowness and insularity for being so concerned with Tokyo and things Japanese, by those so much concerned with London and things English. The greatness of literature depends on the universality of its appeal, and it is quite possible for literature to be distinctly national, and even local or provincial, and yet remain an embodiment of truth and reality. If Japanese fiction seldom rises into this category, it at least records the life experience of the Japanese people, and for this reason it may be profitably studied,

even if one has to look in vain for evidence of creativeness and even invention. But its genius appears to lie too much in the appropriation and refinement of the gains and acquirements of others.

For a time, during the new era, historical literature made considerable progress, but the attempt to distinguish the true from the false in the national annals, and to take a scientific and philosophical view of the past, is rather embarrassing under a theocracy. Accurately to record and interpret history without militating against the national theory of the divine descent of the imperial house meets with stern official displeasure, and many a scholar has suffered from official disapproval, greatly retarding the progress of historical studies and literature. But in all universities both philosophy and history are important faculties, and these subjects are bound to create increasing attention. Men like Tetsujiro Inouye and Masabaru Anezaki have done splendid work in the interpretation of Buddhist and other Oriental philosophy, and Yaichi Haga has proved a worthy disciple.

Much could be written of the influence of the periodical Press on the language and

content of modern Japanese literature, especially fiction where it is most strongly marked, unfortunately not always in the right direction. When literature resorts to the tactics of journalism to win a wider circulation, it is apt to deteriorate in quality. While stimulating the social, intellectual or literary curiosity of the reader, it yet too often follows the line of least resistance by ministering to immoderate or evil passion, making ethical eccentricity more exemplary than exceptional. Of course in all countries fiction is exposed to this temptation, with too frequent a lowering of ethical and æsthetic standards, to extend the range of appeal. The Japanese literary magazines, that correspond to the English *Cornhill* and the American *Atlantic Monthly*, publish articles of literary importance, but are chiefly given to fiction, the moral quality of which is inferior to the literary interest. Not that literature should be essentially didactic or concerned with the propagation of ethical theory, but purity of soul should be implicit in all that is entitled to be called literature. Nor is the form always more promising than the content and execution, for many of the short stories treat plot as of meagre value if not negligible, while

action is even less prominent. This may be a reaction from the usual violence of the national drama and the antics of the kinema. But obviously the literature of periodicals is for those who prefer the twilight atmosphere of sentiment and the reveries of poetry or illusion. Here again we have the native preference for *being* rather than *doing*, and *being* is most vividly realized amid a picturesque environment. Such fiction depicts an existence as lackadaisical as the hearth-rug cat, and as beautiful, if as ephemeral, as a rainbow or a sunset. Too often indeed it is but the primrose path, which so many moderns like to experience psychologically if not actually. Addiction to ease, and contempt for action, may be a natural reaction from the fussiness and haste of modern labour and society. This dreamy if unwholesome literature, like an intoxicant, comes as a relief to physical or mental exhaustion.

But this weakness is not a feature peculiar to the literature of the new Japan. Is not most of the more recent Occidental fiction given more to talk than to action, more to words than worthy deeds? The prevalence of garrulity over courage and sense is marked. The only movement is from one dawdling



place to another in order to talk, most of the talk being the author's own. It is all words, words, words! The hero meets the heroine—to talk. He takes her out to dine—to talk. She takes him to the theatre or the pictures—to talk. In the tepid light of a summer evening they stroll in the garden or by the stream—to talk. Even when their eyes meet and gaze mutually into each other's souls—they talk, only talk. Thought and action are out of fashion. To such criticism there are exceptions, naturally, even in Japan. Some of the short stories in the magazines are quite as good as those they emulate in Occidental periodicals. And some of the best literature of this kind is found in periodicals devoted to the interests of women.

Although a nation's interest in literature cannot be fully estimated from the facilities it provides in the way of public libraries, still it is of some significance that the Imperial Library in Tokyo has more than a quarter of a million volumes, used by about half a million readers every year. Though there are other libraries in the capital, as well as in the larger provincial towns, access to good books for the poor is not equal to the demand

and the need In all the libraries literature, especially fiction, is most sought for by readers Of the more than 25,000 books published in Japan every year scarcely more than a hundred are translations from Western literature, which is remarkable in a country so dependent on foreign books, but it must be remembered that Japan exceeds most Occidental countries in the number of citizens who can read foreign languages, particularly English, French and German The most important translations are from standard works in science, history, philosophy and technical subjects, and the most popular are those from Russian novels, the readers of which appear to be mostly women

Great as is the temptation to offer translated excerpts from modern Japanese prose in these pages, as was done in regard to the prose of former ages, it must be resisted, for the field is so vast and varied that in the space at my disposal no adequate or representative selection could be made How insuperable the difficulty really is will at once appear if one should think of covering two or three pages of a small book with extracts purporting to illustrate modern English prose to show

Japanese readers the quality of our literature to-day The case is quite otherwise in the less extensive and comprehensive subject of poetry

## VI

### MODERN POETRY AND DRAMA

#### 1 POETRY

POETRY remains the most æsthetic and original, if not the most interesting, of Japan's literary efforts, and in form, if not in content, it has undergone but slight variation in a thousand years. An invention of the gods as a mode of communication with man, poetry at once took the divine image, as did man, and thenceforth could no more be improved upon than the human form. This ultra-conservative attitude to poetry, while subjecting all other forms of art and literature to Time's changes if not transformations, is nevertheless quite in keeping with the Japanese spirit, which is slow to interfere with divine avocations and revelations. Being the language of Deity, poetry is the most creative of the arts. But its creative force is seen in its essence and result rather than in its form. Like the sun it never changes, yet is always

revealing new creations, since no two leaves are alike in all the leafy month of June. But the leaf never departs from its form, and the words of a Japanese poem are leaves on an unchanging tree. As a divine mode of speech, poetry comes natural to the ruler of Japan, who is the Son of Heaven, and all the emperors have carefully cultivated the heavenly Muse, and thus transmitted divine messages to the nation.

Japanese poetry, therefore, persists in being itself, and can no more be occidentalized than can the Japanese themselves. In modern times some of the profane devotees of modernism have attempted to defy the fundamental principles of national poetry, but all to no purpose. A diamond can be cut square like a cube, or disk-like as a button, or globular like a bead, but it will not be a diamond, for in such a precious stone the facets are everything. And so with any change of form in Japanese verse it ceases to be poetry. By altering the form you disengage the essence and the poetry is gone. This is why so much of its beauty and truth evaporate in translation. One might argue that, if it be a diamond, its beauty will be equally obvious to all. but that is pushing

metaphors too absurdly far It is a diamond only to those in possession of Japanese psychology and education It represents a spiritual rather than a material reality, as all art does Beauty is racial and psychical and even national, but universality of apprehension depends on culture and environment

To understand and appreciate the *Yamato Damashii* (Nippon Spirit) of the national poetry it is essential to realize that Japan from of old has been a land of poetry and romance, where gods and men have freely mingled, and even still do so There, as elsewhere, the earliest mode of speech was song And the Japanese, even now, think and speak and write in pictures But with them poetry is, I think, more spontaneous than with other races In Japan poetry became a fine art long before it reached any degree of development in any of the nations of modern Europe, and there, too, it has never lost the Arcadian note of its prime It is remarkable, as well as significant, that, through all the centuries, the Japanese have never been indifferent to poetry as supreme among the fine arts An age of prose is usually an evidence of decadence in society

it implies a spirit incapable of either creating or appreciating poetry. Like other countries, Japan has had her cycles of creation and her cycles of decadence in poetry, but in spite of all that paganism has done to darken and stifle the soul of poetry, it still survives and has never been more alive and flourishing than in modern Japan

From the Emperor down to the humblest subject the interest in poetry remains unabated. The Poetry Bureau at the Imperial Palace is an active and important national institution. Every year the Emperor announces themes for competitive poetic composition, and all who feel moved to compete may send examples of their verse to the Secretary of the Poetry Bureau at the end of the year. The number of poems received annually is generally above 25,000. After the New Year, awards are made by a committee of poets acting as judges, the honour bestowed is to have one's poems selected for recitation in the presence of the Emperor and the imperial family at the Imperial Poetry Symposium. Among the themes selected by the Emperor to test the poetic genius of the competitors are some of the more historic scenes of natural beauty, such as New Snow

on Mount Fuji, Pines Reflected in Limpid Water, Cedars by the Shrine, and so on

In poetry as in life and speech the Japanese love concrete images, nor should these be too imposing, for they have to find compression into the narrow compass of the *tanka* stanza. Unlike the Occidental, the Japanese poet does not race along in prolix expatiation. He merely suggests the idea and leaves the reader to develop it. It is a poetry for poets, and creates poets. Never in a hurry, the poet seizes on a point that seems vital and fixes it luminous in the mind. But it must be something to create atmosphere and incite introspection. Poetry enjoys being rather than doing, it belongs not to what is becoming, but to what always is. The idea is not to master Nature but to be enraptured with Nature. From a ton of experience it refines a gram of radium, but you must have the magnifying property of the poetic eye to discern the sparkle of the electrons. Owing to its extreme concentration on luminous points of truth, Japanese poetry is often driven to expedients of technique unknown to our poetry, such as word-play, sound-play, pillow-words and pivot-words, which, like coins of the realm, have a well-understood



currency value to the Japanese mind, though baffling to the uninitiated Occidental; and so we cannot find space for any illustration of them here. But by resort to such devices, simply by a bare turn of phrase, the Japanese poet can suggest a world of meaning otherwise lost.

To the Occidental ear the music of Japanese poetry is often marred by a syllabic redundancy, as in the case endings of Greek verse. But we must remember that this repetition does not offend the Japanese ear. It is possible that consent to such sounds rests on a vague feeling of some cross-rhythm, or syncopation, suggested by these little bell-whispers tinkling along the line of the main rhythm, to let the spirit escape from the rigid exigencies of a literary convention. It is in the mastery of metaphor and simile that the triumph of the Japanese poet is mostly achieved, and for this he is dependent on the resources of beauty stored in memory from reading and experience.

Though it requires some familiarity with the nation's ideas, literature, history, psychology and landscape to appreciate the idioms and allusions peculiar to Japanese poetry, no great profundity of intellect is essential to

perceive a good deal of its beauty. A little patient study brings the magic moment when the mind is awakened to a new aspect of reality. The genius of the poem is microscopic rather than telescopic, of the earth rather than of the stars, for there is more mystery in a germ than in a planet. Nor is the beauty of a blossom to be estimated by its size or position, but by its creative significance. The implication is that creation represents a higher degree of intelligence than either apprehension or appreciation. The poet's mind is aware of the "Ah-ness" of things, and if his readers can thus be made aware of the wonder of reality, the poem is successful. Just as the tiniest floweret is a concretion of the art of the universe, so of this a great poem may be a reflection and image. And the image is often of no more magnitude than the idyl depicted in a Greek vase, yet is cosmic in its implications.

To see the world in a grain of sand,  
 And heaven in a wild flower,  
 Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
 And eternity in an hour,

is the ideal of the Japanese poet. And in truth it is sometimes quite marvellous the

degree of brilliance that can emanate from such tiny gems of verse. Lacking the subtle and allusive power of rhyme, at the command of the Occidental poet, Japanese poetry has yet the *élan vital* of true inspiration. Every true poem fixes permanently a point of intensity in the span of life. If a poet be one who sees the truth so clearly and feels it so passionately that it sets him singing, Japan has long had, and still has, many poets.

While it must be maintained that transition to the modern age has happily affected Japanese poetry much less than some other of the nation's art and literature, it would be too much to suppose that poetry is in no sense influenced by modern scientific knowledge. Though poetry is not the creation of environment, it is none the less affected by environment, and each generation must speak for its own age, or have no poetry. It is the form rather than the thought of Japanese poetry that seems immune to the vicissitudes of time. Though powerfully under the influence of Occidental poetry, the poets of Japan still adhere to the *tanka* metre for all serious work. Attempts at *naga-uta*, or long poems, with alternation of five and seven syllabled lines, have not proved popular. When Pro-

fessors Toyama Masakazu, Yatabe Toyokichi and Inouye Tetsujiro, of the Imperial Tokyo University, published their *Shintaishisho* (New Form Poetry) in 1882, in an attempt to induce the national poets to break away from the traditional restrictions of the *tanka* mode, it was supposed that foreign models would be substituted, but all such attempts then, and ever since, have been in vain. Experiments in rhyme attract even less attention. While the classical mode has been left too much in the hand of the æsthetes, the modernist verse-makers are merely sensational. Some of the experimenters, under impetus from the free-verse writers of England and the United States, have been trying to displace the classical mode by an unpleasing monstrosity utterly foreign to Japanese language and tradition. Yone Noguchi, who has the spirit of poetry in him, like Rabindranath Tagore, essays poetry in English, which often sounds as much like translation as does the English verse of the Indian poet. But while the form remains adamant, the spirit indicates susceptibility to modern views of nature and life. Nature is less mysterious in the new poetry, but none the less lovely, for Nature has a spirit and voice that only poetry can

interpret, but poetry has not yet shown that the natural melancholy of the old civilization can be removed, or even ameliorated, by the new

The greatest poet in the Japan of the last fifty years was the Emperor Meiji, who died in 1912, leaving thousands of poems in classical metre for the nation's meditation. The great Emperor thus not only gave every encouragement to the poets, but himself contributed a vast wealth of poetry to the national anthology. While many of the imperial poems focused the light of truth on points of patriotism that their author desired to remain fixed in the national mind, the majority are concerned with thoughts of humanity, and the beauty of nature in all its aspects: the importance of reverence and religion, of humane relations between all men in the State, the sympathy of the strong for the weak, solicitude for soldiers away in battle, and for the condition of the poor in days of heat and cold, the sunlight on pine trees in the evening, and on the new-fallen snow. The idiom of these poems, while true to the traditions of the classical mode, yet reveal a marked independence of spirit, and a vigour of language and sentiment that seems often

monumental, like the solidity and sublimity of great mountain peaks. The Empress Shoken, Consort to the Emperor Meiji, also wrote delightful poetry, most of which was concerned with interpretations of nature and of daily life, especially the life of woman.

The number of modern poets, both men and women, is so large and varied, that the mention of any by name may seem invidious. Among the more prominent of those writing in the classical mode may be mentioned Matsuura Hajime, who is also a brilliant writer in the realm of *belles-lettres*. As an essayist he easily stands first in line with the best traditions of Japanese history and literature, graceful, idealistic and with a consummate sense of art. His *Bungaku-no-Byakko* (Pure White Light of Literature) reflects a purity of phrase and conception of style unequalled since the Heian era. Arishima Takeo, and his brother Ikuma, have written much poetry that fails to throw new light on old things, for nothing new can be said of sadness and death and human folly. Creative poetry deals with life, not with things excrete.

In modern Japan women have been as

much devoted to poetry as men, and though this has been more or less so from of old, yet not since the Heian era have women taken so prominent a place in the art of poetry, no less than in prose. As their novels are in many respects more wholesome than the fiction turned out by men, so is it also in regard to their poetry. More concerned with art, in its ethical aspect, woman has a clearer eye for beauty, truth and goodness, and consequently the point on which she is apt to fix attention in poetry is not always what a man would select. Hers is not such a superiority of intellect as of intelligence, her ability is not greater but her æsthetic outlook is more natural and sane. Man is inclined to art for art's sake, which usually means for his own sake, while woman usually loves art for its revelation of life and reality. Woman's outlook in Japan reacts favourably on the poetic imagination, and her language has a subtlety and polish not often equalled by the even more fastidious æsthetes of the classical *tanka* measure.

In the annual Poetry Symposium held at the Imperial Palace the poetry of women has taken a high place. Thus after centuries of silence the voice of woman is again heard

among the poets without any loss of music. These female poets give poignant expression to life's more plangent memories, graceful and penetrating revelations of the meaning of childhood, and the last happy moments of sweet adolescence facing marriage. And it is woman alone who can recall the dreams that haunt the lonely hours of motherhood. With woman, too, there are often things too sacred for more than suggestion in poetry, and she alone can do this well.

The lady who writes under the name of "Byakuren" (Lotus Blossom) is devoted to the flower she has chosen for her pen-name, it is the symbol of religion and beauty, life triumphant above the mere and the mire. She reveals the effect of much scientific reading, which gives some of her verse a cosmic touch and tone, her eye fixes a star speeding toward her like a divine joy across the distance from afar. Yosano Akiko also writes delightful poems that reveal the radium sparkle of genius, though the reader must have the microscopic intuition to discern the light. She perceives the eternal "now" of things, the "being-born of things" that impressed Lucretius. Thus she seldom misses the moment vital. Like the tinkle of tiny bells



on temple eaves, blown by gentle winds, this poet's syllables pulsate with subtle passion thirty-one tinkles of melody, each a heart-beat, and then the magic of silence with the witchery of adoration and reality in it. She sees white poppy petals gleam upon the grass like shattered clouds fallen from the sky, and the red ones seen like fragments fallen from the sun. Across the sea horizon she sees the rising moon leave behind the drapery the white waves lent her, and in nature's naked loveliness soir, *Godiva-like*, unashamed above the peeping world. She feels the loneliness of the morning star left gleaming solitary in the chill autumn wind, in the silence of night the mountain streams murmur to her old tales and forgotten dreams. Volcano fires will die, and ocean tides subside, but love's passion who can quell? The loud preachers of prim virtue are always lonely.

The poems of the Baroness Kujo are often touched with the pale melancholy of Buddhist tradition, striving against a fatalism that is fatal most of all to poetry, but she does now and then manage to seize upon a moment of reality and make it immortal to the mind. The poetry of Okomoto Kanoko is instinct with the pathos of vanishing faith in ancient

tradition and superstition, she can no longer pray to the sun as her mother taught her in childhood to do. Katayama Hiroko, a leader of the new woman movement in Japan, is also a poet of no mean gifts, though too often her verse is weakened by propaganda. To her the woman's country of Japan has very narrow roads where a woman can never pass a man, but always has to follow him. But the purity of domestic life she regards essential to the peace and progress of society.

The songs of a nation are not usually included in its literature, and yet they seem as much a part of national life as ancient ballads on which some students of literature set such store. Ballads are taken for literature among nations or periods that have no other, or are otherwise inadequately represented in the history of literature, but songs are as much in the nature of literature as ballads, even though of no great age. The Japanese have a passion for songs, even more than for ordinary poetry. Any Japanese poem may be sung, and often is sung, for all the national verse is lyrical. But, apart from the *tanka* and the *haikai*, or *hokku* as it is also called, there is a wealth of song that is a criticism of life, and applies ideas

to life, quite as much and as well as any other department of literature

The love lyric known as the *dodoitsu* is very popular among all classes, though the more exalted feign indifference, and the *hauta*, or ordinary song, is also in great vogue. The *hauta* is a long poem of lines alternating in five and seven syllables, while the *dodoitsu* is of only twenty-six syllables—three lines of seven each, and then a final line of five syllables. These songs give expression to the elemental emotions of popular or communal feeling to a degree impossible to the classical measure whose recondite allusions and ideas are often quite beyond the comprehension of the multitude. They are to ordinary poetry what the *ukiyo-e*, or genre colour-prints, are to pictorial art, and just as many, even among Occidental collectors, prefer the colour-prints to masterpieces of fine art, so many prefer these simple songs to the classical verse. Some of these fragments of poetry are as charmingly idyllic as the vignettes on Greek pottery, their miniature scenes from nature in association with human sentiment have a universal appeal, especially if well sung, and a graceful vocal rendering is essential to a full appreciation of them. Too

many of these songs are darkened by a haunting melancholy, because sung by *geisha* and other women, for whom the sun of life is declining without adequate human sympathy. Examples of *dodoutsu* and *haula* will be found at the end of this chapter.

It must be obvious to all who have followed the course of this study so far that if the lyric form and mood be regarded as an essential element in the body of a nation's poetry, Japan is indeed a land of the divine Muse, for all the poetry is at least lyric in form if not always in quality. We have seen that for over a thousand years the country knew no other kind of verse, and that even at the present time, in spite of the influence of the new civilization, the old classical poetry is supreme. Whether contemplation of a beautiful gem of poetry before the shrine of some famous sonneteer is a sign of higher culture than a gossipy *tête-à-tête* over the tea-cups about the latest psychopathic fiction may be left to the determination of intelligence.

If it be felt that Japanese poesy is easily vulnerable to the attacks of modern criticism, we should remember our ignorance of the original language and spirit in which it is

written and read Nor can we sit in judgment without some sympathetic acquaintance with *Yamato-damashii*, the spirit of Japan For want of this, the antipodal differences of Oriental and Occidental points of view with regard to allusion, quotation and metaphor are unappreciable in translation This is true of all poetry, especially lyric poetry, for the music crystallized into language cannot be translated If, fresh from the deep-mouthed harmonies of English song, we find in Japanese poetry a haunting lack of certain qualities to us inseparable from lyricism, leaving in us a craving for some profounder spiritual experience, let us be not bitter but patient and hopeful, waiting to learn the proper wavelength The lack of versatility, and often profundity, that must naturally result from restriction to so very limited and rigid a form as the model of the Japanese lyric, is somewhat compensated for by this universal concentration of poetic forces and talents into one species of verse, resulting in a delicacy of sentiment and a felicity of diction unequalled by less devoted lovers of the lyre

As poetry seems to have been contemporary with Japan's acquirement of the art of writing, there must have been a large body of verse

lost through failure to be written. The great mass of the ancient lyric poetry passed away, as in Greece, because it was song-poetry, the soul of which vanished with the music. Much of the most interesting and popular of even modern Japanese metrical production is recited or sung rather than merely read. Thus the few specimens of ancient classical poetry that have come down to us may be only the peaks of whole ranges of lyrical aspiration now buried under the ocean of time.

As to the inheritance received and constantly enlarged, we must at all events admire its purity of form and motive. It is at least unique: there is nothing quite like it in the whole realm of comparative literature. Uniqueness may not imply originality, but here, that is approached more really than is apparent. Though often written in the ideographs of an alien tongue, the *tanka* has persistently resisted the intrusion of alien ideas and influence, remaining a pure product of the native genius. The reason for this immunity to Chinese influence may be chiefly phonetic, for the Japanese language, like the English, is polysyllabic, whereas Chinese is monosyllabic. In poetry these two elements would harmonize no better than brick and

stone in architecture. Consequently Japanese poetry is much more limited in capacity of expression than is prose in which Chinese is freely employed. But even in prose every ideograph is adapted and changed to a sound and meaning agreeable to the ear, eye and mind of Japan. Each syllable must consist of a single vowel, or a single consonant followed by a single vowel, differentiating it for ever from its Chinese original, and making it an integral part of the more euphonious and easily pronounced native *kotoba* (thought leaves) of Japan.

It is hardly necessary to enlarge on the disadvantage of this immunity to foreign influence from a purely literary point of view, especially in a language limited to five vowels and tied to a polysyllabic pronunciation, for, though it makes for smooth versification, it renders impossible that variety and force of rhythm essential to great poetry, and accounts for the brevity of Japanese verse. And, since all vowels are of the same length, the expedient of quantity is precluded, any regular succession of accented or unaccented syllables is not only unknown, but would be extremely disagreeable to the native ear. Thus in spite of its lightness and grace, and

the obvious charm and singularity of its verbal expressiveness, Japanese poetry appears to us like a species of blank verse, the only distinction from prose being its alternation of five phrases in a measure of five and seven syllables. But it has the virtue of brevity and simplicity, on which we have already dwelt, and it is widely read, which gives it a decided advantage over the longer poetry of the Occident. This eager aspiration of the Japanese mind after lyric utterance and music has kept up a copious and constant stream of verse from the beginning of national history down to the present. The range is not wide nor the soaring high, yet the poet embraces all a poet can whose only ambition is to express little fancies under a lyrical impulse, without attempting to sound the profounder depths of life and experience. The Japanese poem is a simple thought or fancy in the briefest of refined speech. It is a ripple along the shores of fairyland, something to charm the cultured mind rather than to arouse emotion, and as the eyes peer back across the ocean of time, these Japanese lyrics seem like "summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea," always rimmed round with softly flowing waves that never



know the sublime storms of grand and tempestuous music

Though the fire of this lyricism is often no more than the fire of suppressed desire, if not the ashes, it yet has an interest in the humbler aspects of existence that Occidental poetry might well emulate. To the Japanese poet remains the distinction of discovering poetic beauty in such insignificant things as frogs and insects, as in this *hokku*

Now I shall dream,  
lulled by the patter of rain  
and the trilling of frogs

For the inimitable quality of veiled reference characteristic of so much Japanese poetry this verse is exceptional

Laugh me to scorn if you please,  
Call me your frog in the well  
Blossoms bend over my well,  
And its water mirrors the moon!

And of insect life, too, the poet loves to sing, in his mind the chaunt of a cricket can awaken fairy scenes of tender and delicate fancy

To day united in love—  
we who can meet so rarely,  
Hear how the insects sing!  
Their trill to our heart keeps time

And thus all through life music of life's little things haunts and cheers the poet of Japan

Hark to the tones that tinkle,  
the chant of the suzumushi !  
If a jewel of dew could sing,  
it would tinkle with such a voice

Yes, my dwelling is old  
weeds on the roof are growing ,  
but the voice of the suzumushi,  
that will never be old

Changed is my childhood's home—  
all but the insect voices  
I think they are trying to sing  
of the happier days that were

These poems have a double implication in regard to love that is exquisitely subtle and charming. They relieve the body of national poetry from that blighting anonymity due to impersonal views of Deity, which bereft national verse of what Hadrian called the "frenzied iambi," so that, with Quintilian, we cannot say, as he said of Archilochus the Greek lyricist, that "compressed into his short and quivering sentences was the maximum of blood and sinew." It is with difficulty that one can acquiesce in the encomium of the native reviewer who assured his readers that

the national poetry of Japan can "make heaven and earth tremble, and bring tears to the eyes of demons"

## 2 DRAMA

When we turn to drama it has to be admitted that in modern Japan it has not kept pace with the more progressive spirit of fiction and poetry. We have already pointed out that in the fourteenth century when the imperial Court patronized the *tanka* poetry, and the *gagaku*, or classical music was not permitted outside the imperial circle, the shoguns became patrons of the *No* drama as a form of social and State entertainment that afforded wider freedom of thought and action than classical verse. The new kind of drama, with its peculiar music and free verse, became popular not only in official but in military society, and though its main purpose was moral, religious and disciplinary, the common people were not encouraged to appreciate it. For the middle and lower classes the *ayatsuri*, or puppet show, was the most popular form of amusement. The musical accompaniment to puppet acting was known as the *Joruri*, or if a melodrama, *Kabuki*, later known as *Shibar*. The imperial Court and its nobles,

the Kugé, as well as the daimyo and gentry generally, considered it beneath them to witness these performances, because both the *Joruri* and the *Kabuki* plays were as coarse and vulgar in language as they were in action and theme, though more rich in incident and passion than the more refined but monotonous *No*. Hence arose the decided difference between what came to be known as the classical and the romantic drama.

Although the *No* fell into disuse under the incidence of new Confucian influences in the sixteenth century, it experienced signs of revival in the nineteenth century, not only because of its honourable tradition and inherent refinement, but through the special encouragement of the late Prince Iwakura and great artists like Kuro and Minoru. To the Japanese mind, now as of old, the *No* is one of the most dignified and intellectual of entertainments that the gentry can offer or attend. The five different schools of this old lyrical drama have their traditions, usages, professional secrets and music, all jealously guarded. Even ordinary folk are beginning to be interested in the *No*, but it is unlikely that it will ever become a popular form of enjoyment. Even scholars seem often doubt-

ful as to its meaning or significance. Yet to the student of literature the Lyrical Drama must always appeal as a source of poetry, for by searching through a wilderness of prose we discover many a flower of great lyrical beauty. The poetic vein is not always so pure as in some of the older songs but it is often richer, and embraces in its scope a world of legendary lore, quaint fancy and religious sentiment, which we do not find in the older classical poetry. By music and posture-dance this poetry is artistically interpreted in the performance of the *No*.

The more popular *Joruri* still continues to be a species of dramatic ballad written to be sung or recited to the accompaniment of the samisen in unison with the movement of puppets. If the Lyrical Drama afforded more scope for epic and action than the classical poetry, the *Joruri* allowed a still freer romanticism in theme and expression, descending mostly to prose, partly narrative and partly descriptive. But not infrequently, like the *No*, it had lyrical passages of great beauty, interpreted by dance-posturing. From a histrionic point of view it is overcrowded with incidents and characters, and is rather lacking in unity. Its dominant virtue is its wealth

of material, often an act is in itself a dramatic poem with matter enough for an entire play. But the *Kabuki*, or popular drama, in which actors take the place of marionettes, has long tended to displace the *Joruri*, and has now almost done so, but there are still theatres where it can be seen.

When men took the place of puppets on the stage the *Kabuki* took precedence to all others as typical of Japanese drama. At its inception in the sixteenth century women were permitted to participate in its cast, but so immoral did the theatre become that men were by law made to take the place of women actors, until modern times when women have again appeared on the stage, and distinguished themselves in their parts. The emergence of the *Kabuki* from the *Joruri* will account for the movement of the *Kabuki* actor resembling so often that of a puppet. In any case the Japanese actor is always more concerned with action than elocution, as we saw in relation to the *Kyogen*. In the early progress of the popular drama there was little or no distinction between the actor and author, often indeed they were the same person, as in the case of Shakespeare himself, for most of the leading actors wrote

their own *libretti*. In the modern theatre they are as a rule different persons, which in some degree has retarded the progress of drama from both a literary and dramatic point of view, for the playwright only too often writes his play to suit the personal talent and peculiarity of the actor, thus reducing the possibility of adequate development of plot and depiction of character.

In various other ways, too, the modern *Kabuki* reveals traces of its origin. It is given greatly to posture-dancing (*shosagoto*), action is not infrequently inconsistent with plot, wit and fancy are dragged in by the ears without regard to truth or reason, the result being a crazy mosaic or phantasy, if not a wild dream. As the actor has to depend too much on stage machinery for effect, less pains are taken with the literary quality of the drama. To ensure sensational effect the hero and heroine are too often of unworthy character. These defects naturally led to an increasing degree of public criticism, until in recent times a marked indication of reform has been evident both in plays and the performance of them. This was hastened by a sudden interest of the intellectual classes in drama, after the impact with Western civiliza-

tion in the latter part of the nineteenth century. When it was obvious that persons representing the highest intellectual and social scale attended the theatre in Europe and America, the same class in Japan broke through the old traditions and did likewise. Naturally the new *clientèle* were more interested in biographical and historical themes than in social affairs and farces, and the result was a sudden development of historical drama known as the *Jidaïmono*. The new plays began to take loyalty, patriotism and filial piety for their theme and ideal. The great actor, Danjuro Ichikawa, distinguished himself in this rôle, with Furukawa and Yoda as playwrights. This drama aimed to have the great characters of history leap out on the stage in a life-like manner, known as *katsuséki*, or living history.

It was soon obvious that the manner of the new drama was too foreign to be popular, the promoters forgot that the national drama had always been musical. Yet a reversion to the old drama was prevented by the advent of a great dramatist, Fukuchi, who co-operated with Danjuro to bring out plays utilizing the histrionic talent of the celebrated actor in exploitation of living history. It was rather



uphill work, however, especially as another great actor, Kikugoro, began to develop the old traditional *Kabuki*. The *Sewamono*, or social drama, was a medley of comic and tragic elements, which at the end of the century had declined in favour of a new type of play known as the *Soshi* drama under the auspices of Suto and Kawakami, the motive of which was political, dealing with contemporary events in a critical way. Lacking in order and coherence, as well as in refinement of language and action, the *Soshi* was quite without value as literature, and scarcely more as art.

Of modern Japanese drama there is little to be said from a literary point of view, since so small a proportion of it can be called literature at all. The popularity of the kinematograph has affected drama, as literature, quite as much in Japan as elsewhere. The ancient lyrical drama, the *No*, is still enjoyed by the intellectuals and the aristocracy, though often now it can be seen only as a form of private entertainment. Most of the plays on the stage of the national theatre, the *Kabuki shibarai*, are based on sensational or tragic incidents in Japanese history, ancient or modern, while some are inspired by his-

trionic examples from the Occident. Some of the modern plays are simply adapted translations from European dramas, for most of the famous plays of other lands have been translated into Japanese. Plays, whether of domestic or foreign inspiration, fall into two classes: the *wagoto*, or domestic drama, concerned with modern life and manners, and the *aragoto* drama dealing with history. There is hardly an important incident in Japanese history that has not been dramatized, and in the most realistic manner, such as the *Chushin-gura*, or Forty-seven Ronin, the *Soga Kyodai*, a vendetta of the Soga brothers, and the *Sendai Hagir*, based on an attempt to poison a child of the lord of Sendai. The influence of Dr Tsubouchi, in translating English dramas and in introducing Western plays and motives on the Japanese stage, has been mentioned in the chapter on modern prose. When the famous actor Kawakami, and his distinguished wife, Sada Yacco, returned from their European tour, they introduced some changes in the method of adapting Western plays to the Japanese stage. For accurate performance of Western drama the Imperial theatre in Tokyo is fully equipped, and the plays put

on the stage there command sound patronage. Toyochiro Nogami's translations of Bernard Shaw's plays introduced a new type of drama already represented among the writers of fiction, and the plays of Ibsen and his school have found favour, though not with officialdom.

With the exception of the *No* plays, poetry now has practically no place in dramatic literature, though the recitation is often rhythmical and the conception or situation poetic. Moreover, the use of colloquial on the stage, as also its frequency in fiction, tends to influence the *genbun-ichi* movement towards a greater assimilation of the written and spoken languages in literature. The old-time prejudice of the aristocracy against the *kabuki shibar* as a plebeian institution is now quite gone, and not only wealthy and aristocratic but even imperial patrons frequent the boxes and stalls of the popular theatre, and popular *yakusha* (actors) have their day, as in other countries. The leading national theatre in Japan is the Tokyo *Kabuki-za*, with accommodation for four thousand people. The theatre is now a distinctly social and moral force in the life of Japan, stimulating and sustaining imagination by abounding in

dramatic episodes where duty and inclination grapple, and in this way it has a no less influence on literature

# EXAMPLES OF MODERN POETRY

Uke tsugishi kuni no hashira no ugoki naki sakae yuku yo wo nao inoru kana !	O Throne of Nippon, our ancient State's firm pillar, unmoved live on ! Through my few days that still are, thus shall be my only prayer ! MEIJI TENNO (1912)
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Midaru beki ori waba okite anazakura mazu emu hodo wo naraiteshi gama !	Flowers have their smiling time, and then their time of wilding , girls should have their smil- ing time, but have no time for wilding ! EMPRESS SHOKEN (1912)
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Tateyama no sora ni sobiyuru ooshisa ni marae toso omou miyo mo sugata mo !	Like Tateyama sublimely soaring sky- ward, let Nippon's honour high o'er all mean things aspire such is Our august desire ! EMPEROR HIROHITO
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Maruyama wa	Less lofty summits
sora no midori ni	vanish in the vaulted
kayoe domo	blue
fuji no mi shiroshi	Fuji rears her head
yuki no tsumorite !	alone in peerless bright- ness, like snow in dazzling whiteness !
	EMPERESS DOWAGER SADAKO

Hana no mitsu	I've seen the flowers fade,
hototogisu wo mo	heard the lonely cuckoo's
kiki-hatetsu—	call ,
kono no nochi no yo	and I'm not afraid
omou koto nashi !	of this life, whate'er be fall, nor of that to come, at all !

ANONYMOUS

Ningyo ni	O dearest dollies,
koi wo yourushino	fascinated by your
tarachine wa	charms
itokenaki hi wo	In sweet childhood days,
chisaki kana ni !	I could hold you in my arms, pure and free from life's alarms !
	" BYAKUREN "

Shiranami no  
nuno ni sugarite  
araiso no  
aki no hajime no  
tsuki noborikinu !

Clinging to the clothes  
which now the white  
waves lend her,  
the full moon arose  
above the shore-line  
slender  
in Autumn's stately  
splendour !

YOSANO AKIKO

Musashino no  
sorin ni tachite  
otsuru hi no  
haha to narabite  
ogamu ko nariki !

When a tiny child,  
standing by my mother's  
side  
in Musashi wild,  
where the woodland trees  
divide,  
I prayed the sun at even-  
tide !

OKOMOTO KANOKO

# MODERN NAGA-UTA

## MEIJI TENNO FUNERAL ODE

Yashima no soto no umi kakete  
mizu kagayaku amatsu hi no  
hikari wo kakusu kuro-kumo ni  
furu wa namida no ame no shita  
yo wa yami to koso narinikeri

Chiyo yorodzuyo mo mashimase to  
inori-matsurishi waga kimi no  
kaeranu michi no-o miyuki ,  
nakedo sasebedo sono kai mo  
naki kyo to koso narinikeri

MOTOORI HOEI

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The light that erst o'er Nippon's isles  
 Its heavenly radiance shed,  
 Now shrouded under endless miles  
 Of cloud, is vanished  
 A rain of tears is falling  
 The darkened world appalling

We prayed that our great lord should live  
 Throughout the endless years,  
 And thus to him did Heaven give  
 The agelessness of spheres  
 No lamentation can avail  
 Now to restore the earthly veil

Omina naru  
 ware ni kawarete  
 mono kau to  
 kimi ide-yukinu  
 samuki tonomo ni

It is I, not he,  
 who should go out to  
 buy things—  
 the woman's duty  
 yet he has gone on he  
 swings  
 along in the cold, and  
 sings!

Kai-narenu  
 obotsuka-nasa ni  
 kai mo ede  
 ame ni nuretsutsu  
 kimi ga kaeran

Unused to markets,  
 he will likely come again  
 with empty baskets,  
 soaked to the skin in the  
 rain,  
 having adventured in  
 vain

Kai karenu  
 kimi ga kai-kishi

But no, he has bought,  
 bought and brought home  
 with him—leeks!

negi no ne no  
mashirosa itodo  
aware fukashu mo

Furoshiki no  
haji yori moruri  
negi no ne wo  
oi-kanetsutsu  
kimi kaeri kinu

His first attempt, what !  
Ah, when I see their  
white cheeks,  
for him my sympathy  
reeks !

Out from the corner  
of his first market parcel,  
despite the scorner,  
he could not keep (What  
a sell !)  
the leeks from peeping  
to tell !

# EXAMPLES OF MODERN SONGS

Yugure ni  
nagame miakanu  
sumida gawa  
tsuki ni fuzei wo  
matsuchi yama  
ho kaketa fune ga  
miyuruzoe  
are ! Tori ga naku  
tori no na no  
miyako ni meisho ga  
aru wa ina !

O mine eyes at close of day,  
down Sumida river way,  
full behold the rising  
moon  
how delightful O !  
Then I wait on Matsu hill  
white sails hovering home-  
ward thrill  
my fancy , and I croon,  
how delightful O !  
Hark, I hear miyakodori,  
Song suggestive of the glory  
of the Capital, a tune  
how delightful O !

*Hauta*



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Yo no akenu  
kuni ga aru nara  
fuare de sunde  
tsumoru hanashi ga  
shite mitai !

Kura ka kuru ka to  
matasete oite  
doko ye soretake  
natsu no ame ?

Kao ni sakura wo  
honnori dashite  
sonnara anata to  
itta kiri !

Hoshi no kazu hodo  
O hito wa aredo  
tsuki to miru no wa  
nushi bakari !

If there be daybreakless  
land  
there will we dwell to-  
gether,  
you and I, love, hand in  
hand,  
we shall be parted never,  
and talk of old times !  
Will he come or will he not ?  
He made me wait in vain  
Where went he ? Gone  
aside, I wot,  
just like summer rain !  
Her cheeks were like the  
cherry,  
blushes of faintest hue  
but all she said was "Merry!  
Is it only you ?"  
Numberless the stars above,  
numberless the men be-  
low  
There's only one moon to  
live  
you, my dearie O !

*Dodonsu*

## VII

### JAPAN'S LITERARY GENIUS

THIS brief survey of Japanese literature has been all too inadequate to portray its real significance and quality. But enough has been said to indicate something of the nation's literary genius. The art of literature is one of the most essential features of social and national progress. By means of it we are instructed in the intellectual, ethical and æsthetic development that has been attained. A people's literature shows what they think, and hence what they are. In this respect Japanese literature is particularly instructive, because it shows how far the country's æsthetic and ethical ideals have been borrowed from China and how far they are original. Here the literature of Japan does not reveal a different history from that of all other civilized nations: its main developments are due to impact with neighbouring influences. But though the inspiration was often from

without, especially from China, the Japanese writers have worked mainly on original lines, inspired by motives direct from nature, especially in poetry, where there is evinced a unique perception of the more subtle principles which govern the evolution of grace and beauty in the vegetable and animal world

The delight of the Japanese poet in the incalculable variety of nature, while uniform in principle, is yet not wholly enslaved to sameness. Studious avoidance of straight lines and all tendency to repetition are as characteristic, in principle, of poetry as of all Japanese art. This aversion to monotony, as a fundamental canon of taste, was probably due to a natural and secret impatience with the rigid conventionality of life under the feudal régime. Art endeavoured to avoid the servile habit of mind that had imposed itself on external society, and so it sought inspiration and beauty in the freedom of nature, for there was little of either in life. It will have been noticed that much of the feudal literature, like contemporary art, was indirectly a protest against the mechanical regimentation of society, and hence was truer to the laws of progress than was society itself. The frequent choice of grotesque sub-

jects, both in literature and art, in dealing with which there was freedom to make faces at some of the more absurd conventions of the time, betrays a similar motive

And yet, literature no more than the other arts, was able to escape the influence of convention, for the true artist must be ever in some measure a reflection of his age and environment. Consequently, in the feudal period, the sense of form is more highly developed than the sense of colour. Of course, for the pictorial artist, form was easier than colour, since ink was the principal pigment. But the poet was more free in this respect, and, while he refused to depict, he never failed to suggest sufficient colour to produce an atmosphere. But like the pictorial artist, he was always more concerned to see how nature was able to robe its mathematical regularity of frame with an endless variety of form, than with the depiction of nature's hues and shades. The skeleton of the *tanka* verse remained the same, but each poem became a body with its own individuality. In devotion to nature the poet had ample scope for originality without contravening any of the rules of conventional society. If it be objected that this art and literature

are too inert, and acquiescent toward nature, it can only be said that all suggestion of the infinitely beautiful yields the delight that the body experiences in pleasant and varied muscular exercise

The Japanese poet knew, better than his critics, that in nature there is always uniformity amid variety, with no want of harmony between symmetry and diversity. Continuity and unity obtain, without any abrupt change or sensation to disturb or displease. Art abhors revolutions, which are mimical because unnatural and abortive. In this the Japanese poet betrayed an æsthetic sense that was of value to art, for, in this way, notwithstanding the curbing rules of feudal society, he enabled the national mind to maintain its psychological independence and freedom, and thus influence civilization and literature in a favourable direction. Herein lies the secret of Japan's capacity to adopt a great variety of ideas and customs from abroad and yet adapt them so harmoniously to her ancient civilization. And this assimilation and adaptation has been, and is, a process as true of Japanese literature as of any other of the nation's achievements.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to insist that

poetry must be more of an inspiration from nature than an imitation of nature, if it is to be creative. It is a question whether the Japanese poet is not, after all, more moved by the processes than the forms of nature, but he never betrays the slightest disrespect for form. To the Japanese mind every aspect of nature is a manifestation of deity. The Japanese love to assemble scenes from nature in their tiny landscape gardens where they can contemplate the divine processes, forms and colours, at leisure. They prefer to admire and worship the sublime eminences of nature rather than to climb and explore them, they believe that art and science are as different as love and anatomy.

Indubitably Japanese literature came strongly under the influence of China, both in matter and form, during the Nara century, and the early part of the Heian era, but, except in the use of the same ideographs and the incorporation of Chinese words into the native vocabulary, this did not interfere more with the development of originality than did the influence of Norman, French and Latin interfere with English originality in literature. Chinese influence was more marked in the social conventions and the industrial arts

than in fine art and literature. Compared with the Chinese models it is always seen that Japanese art and literature preserved a distinctive character. Absolute originality is difficult to discern anywhere, almost every part of Asia has learned something from every other part. The mutual obligations of the various Asiatic nations to one another is one of the most interesting subjects for exploration, in literature, no less than in other directions. But no matter what the original source of Japanese language and literature, her genius has produced a wonderfully diversified woof on the common warp of China, with a stronger individuality of its own than is the case with any other race in Asia. The beauty of Japanese poetry, as well as Japanese art in general, owes practically nothing to foreign inspiration, though motives and themes were sometimes borrowed. Certainly the degree of originality in Japanese poetry is more marked than in the verse of any other nation, nor is this less true of the nation's art generally. It is in its truth to nature that Japanese originality mainly consists.

If this seems only too hazardous an affirmation of the obvious, then it should be asked why it is that no Occidental poet has been

able to approach the *tanka* stanza, nor any artist been able to succeed in copying or imitating Japanese painting? All Occidental efforts in this direction are like trying to make artificial flowers instead of obtaining the shoot or seed. As Japanese art is the flower of the nation's achievement, so is its poetry. And if it be contended that this poetry is too rigid and formal to be natural or beautiful, then all that can be said in reply is, that it draws its inspiration from nature and leaves a natural and beautiful impression on the mind, it is beautiful by virtue of the emotion it excites, as all art must be. The fact that Japanese poetry was a highly cultivated art as early as the seventh century A D indicates that there had been a long course of literary development, literature does not appear suddenly in any country, and certainly not the lyric. That it could appear at all in a period of unsettled social and political conditions makes it all the more remarkable.

If Japanese literature reveals one inherent weakness more than another it is its indifference to personality. This is but a reflection of the impersonal tendency of Japanese civilization in general, due to Buddhist and Confucian influence. Where superiors had rights



but no duties, and inferiors duties but no rights, the obedience of the lower to the higher was absolute, and freedom in a moral sense did not exist. Thus during the feudal period was the individual bound every way about, deprived of freedom for natural development, until he was in complete subservience to his superiors. Consequently, in literature, as in art, the individual is ignored, though there are some encouraging exceptions, but in general, the poet and the painter love things more than people, and nature more than man. Every aspect of nature is minutely, accurately and even affectionately contemplated, but not humanity. Yet along with love of trees, hills, birds and skies we have sometimes the love of men and women, and the sympathy of man for man, without which literature is impossible. But it was a society where it was safer to be impersonal, and so in harmony with the genius of a feudal civilization. Literature was often driven to deal mainly with the lower orders of society, as we saw in the case of the *kyogen* interludes, and the *hachimonjya* fiction, the manners and customs of the superior classes did not afford a promising field for literary ability or enterprise. Novelists preferred the freer atmosphere of the

lower orders of society, which created a sort of *genre* of its own in literature, as it did the *ukiyo-e*, or colour-print pictures. Thus art was forced to bow the knee to *aros* (*ἀρός*) in literature as in painting. The author had to depend on the patronage of wealthy friends, as he often did in England, in order to live.

And yet this defect of mediæval and feudal literature was not due to any absence of marked personality. But probably it was a personality that no artist could truthfully portray without offence. So we have the paradox of a defect proving a compliment to art and literature alike. Nor can the indifference of literature to the beauty of the human form be ascribed to an absence of models, certainly not of female beauty. But where the individual must sacrifice himself wholly in the interest of the State, he counts only as a pawn in art and literature. That this was not altogether true is seen from the fact that the national religion, Shinto, was in large measure a worship of personality, as Japanese religion is still. Thus all personality coalesces in the ruler as representative or head of the race, and to a minor degree in those who become heroes by dying for sovereign and country. This conception of

deity is hardly sublime enough to inspire great literature, and it has not done so. But Japanese literature, like its environment, has the virtue of being essentially, if only, human. But human in the general rather than in the individual or personal sense. The imperfection of human relations, especially between the sexes, and also between the warring or jealous aristocracy, doubtless inimically affected the personal aspect of literature. Nature was so much more perfect and delightful than society. Even animals and birds and fishes became more powerful art motives than the human form and character. Yet when a man or woman did do anything worthy of universal admiration, dedication occurred, and the soul, even while in the flesh sometimes, was enshrined and worshipped. But fear rather than love dominated most human relations. The loved ever lovelier grow, for love is the greatest of beautifiers, as Ruskin contends. Without the pure love-passion literature attains to no supreme degree of art.

It is, perhaps, natural that in Japanese literature should be found an unceasing conflict between imagination and fancy. This is due in large measure to polytheism and

impersonality. Worship must imply sincere personal devotion, but how could any mortal mind worship 8,000 myriad gods, mostly ancestors? Some will be disposed, in these circumstances, to take it as complement to intelligence that deity is so often treated as a source of humour in Japanese literature. It is unfortunate that history cannot show an advanced state of literature, or art, to be always attended by a corresponding progress of the humanities and pure religion. Some of the most æsthetic were the most cruel periods of human development. This was true in Japan as it was in Greece and Rome, or in medieval Europe. It was little consolation to the suffering multitudes in Japan that the Nara and the Heian eras were the Golden Age of Japanese poetry and art. Art and cruelty side by side form one of the darkest paradoxes in human evolution. But is not cruelty always a mark of the primitive mind? It is due to a lack of imagination. Hence the difficulty of understanding how a cruel can be an æsthetic age, for what is art or literature without imagination? Nations weak in imagination are guided more by the eye than by reason, more by fancy than by truth or fact, and hence

are more influenced by form than colour, for colour appeals to the feeling and the imagination. It is not without significance that in Japan painting and writing have always been regarded as kindred arts, but they have always found it easier to paint than to write, for writing requires imagination.

Here again we seem to be faced with a paradox, for does not the Japanese poet leave most to the imagination? He does, but it requires no very strong imagination, as a rule, to realize all that he has left out. Often such poetry is a greater encouragement to fancy than to the imagination. History shows that where intellect is defective, and the attitude toward nature and life is based on fancy or emotion rather than on truth and fact, society is cruel and conceptions of right and justice seriously defective. Where society is more devoted to æsthetics than to ethics, it is ruled more by passion than by prudence and is certain to suffer disintegration, as did Japanese society after the Heian era. European literature furnishes similar examples of the danger of art being prostituted to the service of indolence and sensuality with consequent ruin. In this way Japanese literature tells the same story, showing that where

literature does not minister to vigour of intellect and development of imagination, nobility of sentiment and soundness of body and soul, it but injures both itself and civilization. Under Buddhist and Confucian teaching the Japanese mind learned to be an imitation of nature rather than a creator of beauty and an interpreter of life, and, of this, literature was a natural reflection. Without imagination literature can never truthfully represent natural fact. It imitates but cannot interpret nature, and without interpretation literature lacks ideas and is barren. All mere imitations of nature, whether in literature or other arts, will be found exaggerations or distortions, just caricatures of truth, revealing an epilepsy of the mind in regard to reality. To such literature truth as a goal is impossible. All is fancy or illusion, as Japanese religion taught. Here again it is obvious that the attitude of literature to truth depends on the popular conception of Deity.

The human mind requires something more than nature in order to interpret the truth of nature. Without this ethical spiritual element the delight of the poet and the painter will be mainly in their own skill, in

the action itself, imitation without creation ; the artist thus reveals himself rather than the universal truth of nature In this sense the Japanese poet did reveal himself , but nature reveals something greater than man Literature gains in vitality and dignity only as it reveals the principle that underlies all creation, love of truth and beauty and goodness The difficulty with literature in Japan is that it has always been too much disposed to be concerned with the past and to imitate itself The main function of literature is to discover and interpret the truth of nature and life Towards this end religion did not much assist Japanese literature This is why Japanese literature, unlike the Greek, is less remarkable for its intellectual than its æsthetic content Through defect of religion and philosophy early Japan produced no great minds , and without such minds great literature is impossible In having no Homer, Plato, Sophocles or Thucydides Japan was no worse off than some contemporary European nations , but then Europe was familiar with Greek and Latin literature In her passionate and æsthetic temperament Japan was, and is, the equal of the Greeks, but she failed, and still fails, in attaining to their critical and

constructive power, through defective conceptions of the universal and the ultimate. For centuries Japan was content to play and dream or fight. But recently she has begun to think and to create in the more universal sense. This happy renaissance is beginning to affect her literature no less than other arts. In the East, as in the West, taste is largely a matter of habit, culture is confined to the few. That the many now evince so great an interest in literature means that culture is spreading and will permeate society. If thinking means using one's own head, not that of others, much of Japan's modern literature, especially fiction, is not calculated to cultivate imagination in place of fancy. Those most given to imitation of the past, or of European literature, are too often not those with the best taste and talent. The poet and the novelist are more than ever faced with the problem of how to make a living, and therefore tempted to write for the populace. As the artist of the old school is fast being turned into an artisan under the exigencies of commerce, so the poet and the writer of fiction are compelled to undertake hack work for the Press, until taste loses its power of orientation.



It is quite possible for Japan to produce great literature without any radical departure from her national or racial genius. Each race has its own contribution to make to the temple of literature, the same universal mind speaks alike through all. Truth, even truth to race and character, makes a universal appeal. The poet and the novelist of Japan, with right conceptions of truth and beauty, can utter in permanent form the eternal harmony felt within the soul, as effectively as art requires. What his idea of truth and beauty may be, and how he will express them, depend much on environment and education, but the law of expression must be the same everywhere. All that is worthy of literature must impart that happiness and delight which ever attend contemplation of the beautiful and the true. Japan will, I believe, make a very individual and worthy contribution to world literature some day. The essence of art is its infinite variety, and this is no less true of the art of literature. The spirit of literature is as manifold as nature herself. In his devotion to nature the Japanese author already has an advantage over many of his Occidental contemporaries. In closer touch with the fundamental tenets of religion, phil-

osophy and science he will become a more adequate interpreter of nature and of life. The Japanese author is already equipped with that divine simplicity that does not seek so much to paint a picture, carve a statue, or make a poem, as merely to offer a divine suggestion that has come to him, to create an impression rather than to construct a view, whether of thought, action or life. His motive tends to be æsthetic and spiritual, not material and practical. With ever expanding knowledge and experience the true ideal of the literary artist will be achieved, and the literature of Japan will then make a more universal appeal.

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